

Hillside Playcare Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY219751
Inspection date	19 March 2007
Inspector	Janette Elaina Lockwood
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Registered person	Lesley Jeanne Talbot
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Hillside Playcare Centre opened in 1982. It operates from four rooms in purpose built premises in Southminster, near Burnham in Essex. A maximum of 58 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.00 until 19.00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 95 children from birth to eight years on roll. Of these, 34 children receive funding for early education. There are no children currently attending with learning difficulties or disabilities and there are no children currently attending who have English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 24 members of staff. Of these, 14 hold appropriate early years qualifications and five are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The setting has very clear health policies on managing accidents and emergencies and the majority of staff have recently renewed their first aid training. The supervisors in each room take responsibility for keeping their medication and accident records up-to-date to ensure children are cared for properly.

Each room (with the exception of the baby room) has its own toilet area so children can take themselves to the toilet independently, learning to respond to their own needs. Staff consistently remind children to put their hand over their mouths when they cough and provide tissues at their level. In addition, staff cleverly provide a low mirror next to the tissues so that children can see what they are doing when they wipe their noses. These practices together with children frequently washing their hands help prevent the spread of germs between children.

Staff follow procedures to ensure children have their own bed linen and their own cups and bottles. However, baby drinking cups and bottles are located in close proximity to the laundry and changing area where there could be a risk of cross-contamination.

Snack and meal times are happy, calm and sociable for children throughout the setting. For example, in the room for children aged between three and four years, they have a rolling snack time where small groups eat together at their own pace. Children knowingly talk about what foods are healthy for them and take part in activities which reiterate this. Babies anticipate when their food is coming, showing excitement, and those that are able, crawl or walk towards the table in readiness.

Children are well-nourished. They try new foods and have an imaginative range of healthy foods for snack such as naan bread and chutney or sweet peppers and tomatoes. They are sometimes able to spread their own toppings on bread or crackers giving them opportunities to make further choices in what they eat.

Children thoroughly enjoy their meals which are freshly prepared and cooked each day by a team of two cooks who follow carefully written catering and food policies. The weekly menu is displayed for parents and food intake is recorded for children under two years. Children with allergies or other dietary requirements are well-catered for with alternatives available so that their individual needs are met.

During snack and mealtimes, children are encouraged to pour their own drinks. In addition, all children, including babies have access to drinks throughout the day helping them to learn to take control of and respond to their own thirst.

The provision for children to develop their physical skills is very good as staff skilfully plan a wide range of activities to help them become strong and confident with their bodies. For example, they develop their large muscles using a static climbing frame and slide in the garden and balance and propel themselves on bicycles and scooters. The vast outside area provides frequent opportunities for children to run around using excess energy and to benefit from the fresh air, helping them to be fit and healthy. Staff plan purposeful activities for children to help develop their co-ordination such as kicking and throwing balls.

Indoors, older children sit on their own mats for group time, which helps them to learn about personal space and they confidently line up properly. Children use beanbags indoors to pass to one another using their own techniques. Staff expertly ask children to feel their hearts pumping hard after exercise and some children know that blood pumps through their veins. As a result, they are beginning to understand how their bodies work.

Children benefit from being able to sleep when they need to rather than all having a nap at the same time. Babies' own routines are followed and they sleep in a darkened area in cots.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises is purpose built, child friendly, warm and inviting. An abundance of children's work adorns the walls so parents can see what their children are capable of. All the rooms are well organised with various partitions or screens to provide different zones for children such as a quiet area or messy play area. The low windows in all the rooms enable children to look out onto the large interesting garden to watch other children at play or to wonder at the fish in the wildlife pond.

An electronic security system ensures all visitors to the nursery are screened at the reception area and so children are kept safe from intruders. The premises and garden are checked everyday for safety and staff record these checks.

Staff follow an equipment checklist, to ensure equipment is suitable and safe for children to use. There is an inventory of equipment and a policy on procurement of resources so staff are aware of what is already available as well as how to restock items that are running low. This ensures that children have access to a wide range of equipment to support their needs.

Before going into the garden, staff talk to children about safety and they demonstrate their understanding of simple safety rules and discuss what they should and should not do to help keep themselves safe. Clearly written safety procedures for outings show what staff should take with them and what procedures they should follow. In addition children wear high visibility jackets so they can be clearly seen.

The setting has its own health and safety committee which meets every three months to update the policies, during this time the accident records are skilfully examined to influence any changes required to the risk assessments.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the child protection policy and of their own responsibilities to keep children safe from harm. All rooms have a bumps and bruises book, which reminds staff to discuss any existing injuries with parents or carers. The child protection policy is available to parents, however, this is in the process of being updated to show more clearly the procedures to follow in the event of any allegations being made against staff. Some staff have attended recent training so their knowledge and understanding has been updated. As a result, children are safeguarded in the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The setting ensures that all children, whatever their age or ability, have access to high quality care and education. Staff are fully committed to providing exceedingly good care to meet

children's individual needs and all planning takes account of previous observations and matters arising to ensure children influence what happens next.

Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework effectively to provide activities and care for children under three years, helping them develop at their own pace, whilst expertly identifying their next steps. The framework is used to plan purposeful activities to help them develop into strong and healthy children who thrive on new learning experiences and can communicate well.

Babies up to two years have frequent opportunities to make connections through their using their senses to explore and discover new textures and sounds. Staff plan activities that allow them to use messy materials such as paint or cornflour and water 'gloop' and they enjoy being creative as they experiment with the different sounds to be made with the musical instruments. Staff interact well with the babies helping them to find their voices and giving them opportunities to respond and listen to others.

Staff expertly carry out regular spontaneous and planned observations which help them complete the babies' profiles. These are informative and well-written showing aspects of their development to monitor, for example, walking and balance. It shows identified needs and areas to develop and this helps to inform staff of components to include in the planning.

Children between two and three years are very confident in talking to visitors; eager to include them in their play because they are used to good quality attention from staff. For example, staff frequently read children stories in small groups throughout the day. The children use the role play area and small world play to expand their imagination in pretend situations, helping to make sense of the world around them. In addition they show great enthusiasm for singing, particularly when they choose their own songs to sing. Children in this age group enjoy plenty of opportunities to explore new materials such as bark or shredded paper and staff use their ideas to make these into exciting activities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff expertly plan the curriculum to promote extremely good progress towards the early learning goals using the evaluative key worker observations as well as the children's own interests. In addition staff include home links and meaningful related issues from previous activities to devise purposeful activities for children. The comprehensive plans include a key learning intention; show what resources to use and details for staff include differentiation, vocabulary and assessment and as a result children learn effectively.

Staff are excellent at leading children and supporting them in their play; knowing exactly the right type of questions to ask so children think carefully about what they are doing or their intentions. Staff understand the benefits of small group activities which enable children to learn at their own pace, with tasks adapted to meet their individual ability. As a result, more able children are challenged and are progressing extremely well in all areas of the curriculum.

The accommodation and resources are used positively and staff spend the majority of their time with the children. They skilfully use a range of methods that help all the children to learn effectively and each day a very good balance of worthwhile free play activities are available as well as more focused activities.

Staff manage children very effectively and the calm atmosphere and rich learning environment inspire and motivate the children to learn naturally through their exploration and investigation.

Relevant observations help staff to write accurate assessments of children's progress so they can identify what children need to do next.

Children are extremely confident and demonstrate their developing independence, putting on their own coats, taking themselves to the toilet and choosing when to have their snack. Staff actively help children develop a sense of trust and belonging by talking about what activities are available next and discussing relevant issues. Children are given frequent opportunities to talk about their home life and bring in interesting items from home to show others. For example, children brought their pets in to show their peers when the project was about animals.

The learning environment is text rich and throughout the routines, staff skilfully help children to link sounds and letters. In group time for instance, staff frequently ask children to identify whose names begin with certain sounds. Children are also very confident in recognising their names and some more able children can recognise and say initial and individual sounds in their names.

Purposeful activities such as writing their own names on their work help children to see writing as important. In addition, staff provide worthwhile opportunities for children to use their emergent writing to record what they have done and some children form very recognisable letters. Children use the quiet area often, settling down comfortably and choosing a favourite book. They handle books very well, turning the pages properly and looking from front to back; sometimes running their fingers along under the words to show they understand that text has meaning.

Children demonstrate an excellent understanding of simple calculation and confidently use the mathematical equipment to match correct number of items to the numerals. Some children can count accurately up to 20 and use numbers as a matter of course in their play. They show a clear understanding of different ways to make the same number and talk about how many more they need to make a number.

Staff expertly use the routines to talk to children about calculation, numbers as labels and for counting and regularly ask them questions about shape, space and measure. This makes children think and ask questions themselves to find ways to work out the answers so they begin to see the importance of mathematics in their everyday life. For example, how many more children can sit at the table if there are six chairs and only four children sitting down?

The learning environment helps children to understand the importance of technology. There are two computers always available with a printer and headphones which children use skilfully and independently for a range of activities from drawing to learning to recognise letters. Staff plan additional exciting activities using technological toys such as remote control cars.

Staff cleverly plan the use of construction equipment, carefully showing children the components and how they fit together so they can design and build their structures. Children are able to investigate nature and highly benefit from observing the setting's own wildlife pond area which they visit in small groups. They often look through the low windows to observe vehicles such as farm machinery going past the nursery and staff often use these opportunities to extend children's learning about their environment.

Children thoroughly enjoy opportunities to use their creative skills, using different mediums such as paint, materials and magazines for example. They frequently express their own ideas using the paints and collage and plenty of plain paper is available for them to help themselves so there are no limits to how much art they can do. Staff plan regular activities for children to

use their senses. For example, through making 'touch' squares with different textures, visiting the sensory garden to experience the different scents of the plants and tasting different foods.

There are excellent opportunities for children to use their imaginative and role play skills as staff provide a different role play area each week. For example, the area can be presented as a café, a builder's yard, an opticians or a Chinese restaurant. The staff spend some time with the children in the area, helping them to talk and think about their own experiences and children are inspired to use their imagination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff plan valuable times for children to reflect and have tranquil moments, for example, using a special children's yoga audio tape. They listen to a wide variety of music and often choose to sit quietly looking at books to give them time to relax.

Children show a very caring attitude to their peers and are careful not to hurt them. They are exceptionally polite and well-mannered to one another and to staff. Children are beginning to develop strong friendships with particular children and have begun to make a friendship book with their own pictures they have drawn of their friends.

Staff broaden children's cultural development by visiting the local church to take part in their Christmas production and in addition participate and learn about charity events such as Comic Relief and Children in Need.

The learning environment helps children to appreciate similarities and differences in themselves and others, with good quality posters showing people with disabilities, of different ethnicities and with languages. The range of books showing positive images of people with mixed heritage families and different home cultures is very good, helping children to learn about diversity.

Staff promote children's understanding of other people's beliefs by cleverly planning activities related to festivals such as Eid ul Fitr and Diwali. There is a well-written policy regarding children with English as an additional language to help with inclusion. The equal opportunity policy names a member of staff who reviews and monitors books and resources and new staff and students attend an induction which includes learning about equality and inclusion in the setting.

The setting has a special needs policy and a special needs co-ordinator who is assisted by other staff trained in this area. It is recognised that some children may have special needs and there are clear systems in place to support them. Staff are committed to working closely with parents and specialists to ensure children are fully included and can progress at their own pace.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They follow the excellent examples of staff and speak to each other with respect and with very good manners. Staff frequently praise children and take every opportunity to boost their self-esteem. Children follow the simple rules very well and listen carefully to what staff say. In this positive atmosphere, children feel able to report things to staff, such as spilt water, knowing that it will be dealt with calmly and without blame.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The setting thoroughly recognises that parents and carers are the children's first and most important educators. As a result, there is a parental involvement policy which reflects this positive attitude, underpinning the good practice of working together with parents to help children progress well. Staff are proactive in supplying

parents with valuable information to help them understand the Foundation Stage and planning is displayed. Outside the room for funded children, there is a white board with clear information about the current topic and what children will be doing as part of their learning. Parents are then able to make their own contributions to the topic.

Parents are provided with an abundance of relevant information about the setting and their children's progress, with regular meetings to share records, discuss progress and their next steps in learning. The setting actively seeks the views of parents by giving them frequent opportunities to comment on their child's learning both at the setting and in the home at least every three months. In addition they maintain valuable on-going contact with parents to talk about children's responses to activities. This forms an important part of the planning as staff take account of home factors when devising them each week.

All parents receive a regular newsletter and relevant information is available in the entrance hall in the form of notices, leaflets, policies and procedures and the operational plan. The complaints procedure is consistent with the National Standards and the setting keeps a clear log of any complaints and manages them in a thorough and timely manner.

Parents of children under two years receive daily diaries which are completed every day to show food intake, sleep and nappy routines. They detail what the child has been doing so parents are highly aware of what has taken place during the day. As a result, there is consistency between the home and setting which helps the children settle better and develop a sense of belonging. Outside the baby room there is plenty of relevant information on regarding issues such as feeding and weaning, tips on sleeping, talking to babies and understanding biting.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The manager and the officer-in-charge work extremely well together to review the effectiveness of the setting. They use self evaluations successfully to make improvements to teaching and learning and have on-going plans throughout the nursery to keep abreast of current thinking. The manager and the officer-in-charge directly influence the staff by keeping them informed and giving them opportunities to use their skills.

The setting extensively monitors the progress children are making towards the early learning goals and use successful teaching strategies to challenge them. There are high expectations of the staff and children which motivates and inspires the setting as a whole to provide a high quality service.

Children are protected because there are robust procedures to ensure staff are suitable to work with, or be in the proximity of children. The quality of staff employed is very high and they are given important roles and responsibilities which are carried out to a high standard. Staff are committed to training and keen on keeping up-to-date with current child care practices.

The nursery has a clear management structure and all senior members of staff have defined roles and responsibilities. Induction procedures for new staff are good and the on-going support that staff receive to identify their strengths and weakness is regular and evaluative. The balance of mature and younger staff combine their individual qualities to positively influence the care of the children. Overall, children's needs are met.

Senior staff attend cluster meetings in two adjoining areas to help keep them informed of issues affecting the children and families in their area and they respond to new initiatives with enthusiasm. They seek advice and support when necessary from other professionals and understand the importance of keeping Ofsted informed of any significant changes and events.

The setting has developed a wide range of effective procedures enabling staff, volunteers and parents to understand how the setting operates on a day-to-day-basis. The operational plan is available to parents along with the well-written policies and procedures.

The records are kept to a high standard and include all relevant and necessary information to ensure children are cared for properly. They contain valuable information which clearly shows what has occurred on any particular day. For example, staff and children's records show times of arrival and departure, accidents and medication given and food provided. In addition the children's records, daily diaries and handover books record what has gone on during the day. Through the good record keeping parents can be assured that the care their children receive is of good quality.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the setting was asked to organise a quiet area where older children can rest comfortably during the day. Each room now provides a quiet area with cushions and books and some of the areas are screened so children can rest in safety and comfort. During the last inspection the setting agreed to develop the planned activities and experiences provided for children in their outside play and there are now written plans available to show what children do in the safe and enclosed outside areas.

At the previous inspection the setting was asked to develop the assessment and planning to ensure children make progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Children's assessment records now clearly show how children are progressing.

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):

- ensure that anyone responsible for laundry and changing area and storage of bottles and cups is aware of, and complies with, Environmental Health requirements.

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