

Squirrels Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	511691
Inspection date	02 May 2007
Inspector	Sylvia Dindar
Setting Address	Nelson School, Nelson Road, Whitton, Middlesex, TW2 7BU
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Registered person	Squirrel's Nursery Association & 'committee'
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?

Squirrels Day Nursery was registered in 1991.

It operates from two rooms plus a bathroom, kitchen and office in a building with its own fenced off garden, within the grounds of Nelson School, Whitton. The Nursery serves the local area.

The provision is registered for 25 children aged two years to five years. There are currently 22 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 10 funded three-year-olds and six funded four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Two children have special needs and the group supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week throughout the year, but offers term time only places to half the children. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm.

Four full time staff work with the children. All have early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are provided with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods, freshly prepared on the premises. Menus are well planned and offer alternatives to children who may have special dietary needs, such as vegetarian, or who have allergies. Children are able to access a drink when needed as a jug and clean cups are available for them on a low table and children are encouraged to help themselves. Children are offered milk, weak fruit juice and healthy snacks such as rice cakes and fruit throughout the day. Robust systems are in place for the safe storage and handling of food. Cleaning routines are very effective in the kitchen minimising the risk of cross contamination.

Children follow good hygiene routines, for example, they wash their hands after toileting and before eating food. They are provided with individual flannels to dry their hands and these are regularly laundered. However, staff are sharing a towel which means there is a risk of cross infection. A rota system is in place to ensure that toys and equipment are regularly cleaned, however, this is not effective as some equipment such as the chairs are showing ingrained dirt and some well used toys, such as the dolls, are not clean. Surfaces in the sink area are not well maintained, which means they are porous and difficult to keep clean.

Effective procedures are in place to ensure that children are well cared for when they are ill. All staff have a current first aid certificate so are able to provide basic first aid to children. When children feel unwell at the nursery, staff are gentle with them, monitor them well and provide a quiet place for them to rest. Parents are contacted and made aware. Systems for the safe administration of medication are in place. Accidents are well recorded and shared with parents.

Children love being outside and are developing a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy fresh air, exercise and physical play every day weather permitting. They take part in a variety of activities both inside and out which give them opportunities to balance, climb and slide. They pedal confidently on ride on toys. These activities help children develop physical skills and keep them fit and active. All children are keen to take part in a weekly gym class when an independent trainer comes in and leads children through a range of fun exercises to further develop their fitness, co-ordination and balancing skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment where good organisation of the play environment ensures that children have access to a range of interesting and stimulating play opportunities to meet their needs. The play provision is of good quality and staff regularly check to ensure it is in good repair, ensuring children's continuing safety. Children become independent in their choice as they have easy access to toys which are stored in low units and displayed attractively. Staff use risk assessment to identify hazards and counteract them by putting safety measures in place. For example, staff note that the bridge on the climbing frame is unsafe so have stopped children using this part and put physical barriers up to remind children. Children move around freely and independently because the building is secure and because staff mostly show appropriate supervision. However, staff have recently implemented a free flow system where children can go outside if there is a space. Staff are not monitoring this effectively which means

that ratios are not being maintained and children are at risk because areas such as the climbing frame and gate cannot be adequately monitored.

Children regularly practise the fire evacuation process so become familiar with its process and can be quickly and safely escorted out of the building and fire safety equipment is regularly maintained by the school.

Children are safeguarded as staff have knowledge of child protection issues and systems are in place to ensure any concerns are dealt with effectively.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are relaxed and happy in the nursery due to the careful preparation that takes place before a child starts nursery. Key workers visit the children in their home environment and gather information off parents so that they are able to meet the children's individual needs. Children are able to bring comforters from home and children quickly settle into familiar routines. Staff know that children learn best when they are engaged in activities of their own choosing. Staff use the Birth to three matters framework effectively to plan and provide a well thought out, stimulating play environment both inside and outdoors. A good balance of adult and child initiated play takes place, so children have lots of opportunities for choice and are learning to make decisions for themselves. Staff make observations of children at play and keep careful records to track children's progress. These plans are used to then inform future planning ensuring children develop at pace that is appropriate for their needs. Care and consideration is given to grouping of children. They spend time with older children and learn off their peers as well as having activities with their own age group. Lunchtime is a sociable time when children sit with their key workers in family type groups. Food is presented attractively in bowls; children are able to help themselves and also learn to consider the needs of others as they share the food. They enjoy this time talking about the things that are important to them. They are learning to be independent as all children are expected to clear away after they have eaten. Children are keen to help and have a sense of importance when they are asked to get dishes or spoons from the trolley. Children are learning independence in dressing and undressing as they go to the toilet and dress and undress for the gym session. Staff encourage them to try for themselves before offering help which results in children often succeeding, promoting their self-esteem.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Children flourish in this rich and exciting environment. The staff plan a range of exciting activities, which cover all areas of learning and link to the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage curriculum. As a result, children are enthusiastic learners and keen to learn. They concentrate well during routine activities, such as large group time. Staff are good role models and value the work that children do; they use some to make a bright, colourful environment in which to learn.

A balance of adult and child initiated play take place, giving children a flexible structure to their day. Children are able to access an excellent range of resources. At times children are able to freely flow from inside to outside. Both environments are rich in activities and cover the six areas of learning, however the outside area is still being developed and children have limited opportunities to see written numerals. Free play times offer children a great deal of choice and

so children are learning to make decisions for themselves, using their imagination. Storage is well thought out, well organised and clearly labelled so that children can help themselves.

Clear assessment records are completed to indicate which stepping stones the children have achieved or are working towards. These inform the planning. Regular staff meet together to discuss children's progress and plan activities, to allow differentiation in learning, ensuring children's individual needs are met. These plans are flexible enough to allow for children to take control of their own learning and for staff to help them get the most out of their activities. Each play session is evaluated daily so that staff are aware if they need to make adjustments to ensure the planning meets the needs of the children. This sound system ensures all children are continually making progress, in an exciting learning environment.

Children are busy chatting to each other and most are beginning to express themselves clearly. They enjoy talking to staff and are keen to tell them what they are doing and show off their work knowing they will get the attention they need. Children are developing a good vocabulary; they are beginning to understand text has meaning as they handle books both indoors and outdoors. Books are well organised so that children can access information as well as story books. Photograph albums form part of the book corner and children enjoy looking at these, reflecting on what they see and recalling past events. Clear labelling and pictures around the room help re-enforce the message that text has a purpose and meaning.

Children count confidently and use mathematical language with confidence, talking about shape, size and quantity during their play. Staff are skilful at making opportunities for calculation, through everyday activities, such as how many pots they need when planting seeds or at meal times, counting how many children need bowls. Children also have more focused activities where they work out comparisons.

Children have access to an excellent range of large and small books. Some have textures and flaps. They are colourful, interesting and well displayed, as a result children use them regularly and handle them well. For instance, when outside a child chooses a book and goes off with his friend to sit in the tent and read it. Another child sits on the balancing beam and is oblivious to what goes on around her as she explores the pages. Children then put the books back taking care of them. Staff plan and use a core set of books to plan themed activities. This ensures that children become familiar and learn about the structure of stories. This is evident as children clearly love the 'Hungry Caterpillar'. Children are able to confidently recall what happens and anticipate the end. This book supports the topic about the life cycle of the caterpillar and children are able to relate it to a real experience. Most children are learning to recognise the sounds and shapes of letters as they take part in the group activities. Children are able to recognise their name for example at circle time, as they self register and at meal times when they find their place mat. To aid those children who have limited language. Staff use picture enhanced time tables, and repeat familiar words to children. Staff support these children well at group times. They give them lots of eye contact, praise and encouragement. Makaton is used regularly by staff as a form of communication in songs and stories and at circle time. Children are enjoying using it in their songs and rhymes and some are beginning to sign impromptu, for example when sitting with a member of staff after lunch a child practises using words she has heard.

Children are gaining confidence in using one handed tools, such as paintbrushes and pencils during their play. Both inside and outside areas have a resource area where children can access the equipment for writing. Children enjoy using chalks to draw pictures on the paving.

Children explore with sand, dough and paint. They are particularly interested in the artificial snow and enjoy talking about its texture, how it feels and relate it to the winter months. This activity is made more interesting because the group have purchased arctic animals so children are discovering about the natural world. Children enjoy gardening they grow seeds and are keen to take care of plants. They are learning where fruit and vegetables come from as they grow their own food, such as tomatoes and beans. Children develop their information technology skills as well as the language for technology as the nursery has an attractive computer corner. Bright disks hang from the ceiling capturing children's attention. Text is displayed showing the familiar word connected with the computer. Photographs show them learning to use a mouse with simple programs which support their learning.

Children enjoy music sessions and are able to choose from an excellent range of musical instruments both from familiar and different countries. Children are learning to beat out rhythms and how to play softly and loudly as staff give them good guidance. Bright informative posters are displayed to make the music area interesting, showing the bigger instruments available.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children are included within the nursery setting as all have access to all activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children feel included and acknowledged as their photographs are displayed. They have a sense of belonging as they all have a place to put their coat and their flannel. Staff acknowledge the children for who English as a second language and promote this positively with photographs and discussions celebrating their diversity. Visual timetables are used so that children with little understanding of language learn about the routines of the day. Staff have recently trained and are using signing to aid all children in their communication skills.

The group employ a trained Special Educational Needs Coordinator whose job it is to support and identify those children who need extra support. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals to ensure that children receive the help they need to allow them to develop their full potential.

Children are treated with respect and have a sense of importance as they are included in familiar routines in the nursery. For example, they help set the tables and clear away their dishes when they are finished eating their meals. They are encouraged to be polite to say 'hello', and to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff ensure that children who do not have English as their first language are provided with familiar words from home. All staff work together to ensure that children receive consistent messages. Basic rules are given to children and these are around the safety of themselves, others and their property, for example, when children are throwing the gravel that has recently been put down in the garden they are asked gently not to, reminding them of the reasons why. The message is re-enforced when another member sees them doing it again and gives the same message. Children are learning to take turns and share through group games and through the use of a timer system so children have a visual aid and can see that fairness prevails.

Children benefit as staff take time to build trusting relationships with their parents. Staff initially visit children in their home surroundings and gather information from parents about their child's likes, dislikes, familiar words and routines. After a six week initial settling in period, parents are invited back into the nursery to discuss their child's development and input into the

assessment is made. Parents receive a prospectus that informs them about how the nursery runs and advises them of policies and procedures. The nursery provides children's development reports twice yearly and shares these with parents.

The partnership with parents and carers is good and this has a positive impact on children's wellbeing. Parents are provided with a wide range of information through notice boards and regular newsletters. Plans are displayed in the room and parents have access to their child's progress records, and are welcome to speak with staff to discuss their child's progress at any time. Parents state that staff are very approachable and friendly and that they have built good relationships with them. They feel supported when settling their child in and this has resulted in children settling quickly and gaining confidence. They are given a good insight into their child's session from verbal feedback when they collect their children. They are able to have an input into their child education and suggest ideas. Policies and procedures are available for parents to see and include a complaints procedure and record.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provision meets the need of the children for whom it provides. Robust recruitment procedures are in place ensuring that staff have the appropriate knowledge and experience for their roles and responsibilities and are suitable to be with children. Ratios are mostly well maintained and particular care is given to cover staff absences so that children get the continuity of care they need to make them feel secure.

Children benefit because they are cared for by key staff that are knowledgeable about child development and know them well. They plan a broad and balanced curriculum using both the Foundation Stage of learning and Birth to three matters framework to ensure that children's individual needs are met. Space and resources are well organised and provide a stimulating environment in which children develop and flourish.

The leadership of management is good. The committee and staff have clearly defined roles and a strong vision for the future of the nursery. The committee employ a manager whose role is to plan, implement and monitor the nursery education programme and report back to the committee. Staff work very well as a team and systems to deputise in the manager's absence are sound so that children get seamless care and education. They constantly reflect and review their practice in order to provide good quality education to children. Their enthusiasm has a positive effect on children and encourages and motivates them to learn. All staff are expected to observe and record children's progress, however some less experienced temporary staff are unsure of the learning outcomes yet are asked to evaluate children's play. Developmental records are kept up to date so that they can be used effectively to inform future planning, ensuring children make continuing progress through the stepping stones. Staff get the support they need. For example, new staff follow a well organised induction procedure so that they know what is expected of them. Staff meetings are used as a time to discuss practice issues, plan activities and share information about the needs of the children. Annual appraisals are used to reflect the practitioner's strengths and weakness. Areas for development are then highlighted and future training is planned to fit in with the needs of the nursery. Staff regularly meet with other professionals to share expertise and keep up to date with current best practice.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was required to review the organisation of storage space and the safety of children when they have access to the office area. To address this the provider has put up shelves and rearranged equipment which means that there is much more clear floor space and less clutter. They have bought an outside shed and now store a large amount of equipment in this area. A pictorial notice is put on the door and it shows children may come in when invited and accompanied by an adult.

The provider was required to review procedures and provide records for recording staff attendance and the monitoring of emergency evacuation procedures and fire safety. An in depth fire log is now in place, the frequency of fire evacuations are recorded and staff evaluate and record its effectiveness to ensure the safety of children. A written record of staff's arrival and departure is in place so Ofsted are aware of who is looking after children and that ratios are being maintained. They were required to review and develop a range of policies including policies on Special Needs, Equal Opportunities and Child Protection to ensure that they reflected their practice and complied with the National Standards. All policies within the nursery have been reviewed and reflect the nursery practice and meet with Ofsted's requirements.

At the last Nursery Education inspection the group were required to develop children's use of calculation. The group have broadened children's experience of calculation. Children now play a number of board games and use dice and use compare bears and are learning about calculation. Staff make good use of mealtimes and circle times to give children the opportunity to use calculation.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 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 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):

- further improve cleaning regimes and maintenance in the nursery.
- ensure ratios are maintained at all times and that children are adequately supervised in the garden area

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):

- further develop the opportunity for children to experience the use of numerals in the outdoor area
- ensure that all staff making evaluations of children's activities have knowledge to do it effectively

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