

University of East London

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY341731
Inspection date	04 May 2007
Inspector	Fiona Sapler
Setting Address	University of East London, Children's Garden, East Building, 4 University Way, London, E16 2RD
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Registered person	University of East London
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Sessional 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?

Children's Garden Early Years Centre is managed by the University of East London and is open to all members of the local community. It operates from three rooms in a purpose built building and is situated within the grounds of Docklands Campus. The centre aims to introduce early childhood education inspired by Steiner (Waldorf) philosophy. A maximum of 49 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 20 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for early education. The centre supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven full time and three part time members of staff, including the manager. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive in the setting because there is a strong emphasis on meeting their physical, nutritional and health needs. They have an excellent understanding of how to maintain their own good health to a high standard and are expertly encouraged by the practitioners to meet their personal care needs independently. For example, they fully understand that they must wash their hands before making their snack. They confidently tell the staff member that they have finished and 'I am going to wash my hands now' and know why this is necessary. The children also recognise they must wear their indoor shoes inside the nursery and will sit and change into their outdoor shoes without prompting before going outside.

Highly stimulating indoor and outdoor experiences help the children explore how their bodies work, for example, when they excitedly tackle a daily obstacle course or sweep up in the garden. Gardening activities, such as watering the plants, further develop their knowledge of how things grow and what we need to stay healthy. Children expertly manipulate and handle small tools and develop their hand/eye co-ordination when they sand down twigs to use as markers in the garden, stir and pour dough mixture and tie small knots to make their May Day bracelets.

The children greatly benefit from the balanced routine that also offers them time to rest and relax according to their own individual needs whether on the comfy couch or at rest time. This is structured to provide a calm, peaceful environment, accompanied by soft music, providing the perfect opportunity for the children to snuggle up with their favourite toy and a book, helping to contribute to their real sense of security and belonging.

Children are protected and nurtured as the practitioners prioritise the children's well being and effectively follow the procedures relating to sickness, accidents and medication.

Children are able to competently pour their own drinks, whenever they feel thirsty, from child size jugs that are accessible to them throughout the session. They take great delight in working together to produce their own daily snack of nutritious and healthy choices such as bran muffins, cornbread and fruit salad. Mealtimes are enjoyable, sociable occasions and are designed to help the children appreciate the goodness of the food that is provided.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move around confidently in an attractive and child friendly environment. They enter, at the start of their session, via the beautifully landscaped garden. This provides a welcoming and inviting start to their day. The centre is painted in muted shades, according to the Steiner approach, and designed so that children do not have access physically or visually to the 'workings' of the centre, such as the laundry area, offices and kitchen, reinforcing the calmness of the setting.

Children have access to very good quality furniture, equipment and toys. The centre is fully equipped according to the Steiner philosophy that encourages the use of natural objects that are as unfinished as possible. For example, children are provide with sticks, stones and pieces of cloth as well as a range of wooden toys and bricks that allow them to be creative and experimental.

The children's safety is prioritised throughout the session as the staff are vigilant and deployed effectively to provide a good level of supervision at all times. A visual risk assessment is carried out daily to minimise potential hazards, however this system does not fully promote consistency and ensure all areas are thoroughly checked.

Security measures effectively maintain a safe environment for the children and regular fire drill practises are recorded and comprehensively evaluated. This ensures that children are aware of what to do in the case of an emergency and that any issues can be identified and addressed

Children are well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection policies and the actions to take if they have concerns about a child's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children develop extremely close, trusting relationships with each other, and the adults in the setting, promoting their confidence and self esteem and a real sense of belonging. Children are inspired to cultivate a diverse range of skills through doing, experiencing and imitating. The emphasis is given to regular patterns of activities both within the day and over each week helping the children to feel exceptionally secure and settled. Themes follow the seasons of the year and introduce the children to a wide range of sensory experiences such as tilling the soil and planting wheat to be harvested in the Autumn. The well thought out range of resources provided encourages the children to use their imaginations. For example, pieces of cloth are used for dressing up, wrapping dolls and making walls. At outdoor playtime the children are given opportunities to freely explore their environment whether they choose to run and climb or help with gardening projects. There are also more structured activities such as nature walks, sewing, beeswax modelling, baking and simple woodwork that further enhance their time at the setting. Adult led activities such as puppet shows, story telling and circle time provide a wonderful balance to the children's day.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are highly motivated to learn because they are exposed to a range of stimulating activities that help develop their natural curiosity and provide them with numerous opportunities to explore and experiment.

The children choose to read books alone or alongside their friends and listen intently to stories and puppet shows. Circle time incorporates rhythmic poetry and singing, the children avidly join in and recognise the familiar songs and rhymes. They use complex vocabulary during themed and routine activities, such as when they talk about reflections in the water or explain that they must knead the dough. Children confidently talk about their families and experiences, initiate conversations and contribute at group times. Older children are encouraged to write their own names. Children have many opportunities to make marks that have meaning, for example, when making the labels for their seed garden and most of them recognise their names on their place mats and coat pegs.

Practical and interesting mathematical processes, such as measuring the distance required between planted seeds, weighing ingredients and comparing the number of children to the numbers of plates and chairs required at lunchtime helps the children to significantly develop their skills in counting and measuring.

Children experience a real sense of community as the university campus provides many opportunities for them to absorb the rich diversity in the world around them. For example, they join in May day celebrations by dancing around the maypole and thoroughly enjoyed the Sri Lankan New Year festivities and listening to a samba band. They visit the university library and use the nearby river for nature walks.

The staff team comprehensively assess and record the children's starting points enabling them to accurately monitor their achievements. Daily observations identify the children's progress along the stepping stones and very effective planning ensures that each child's individual developmental needs are met within the framework of the day enabling them to reach their full potential. An excellent combination of adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Practitioners expertly involve the children in conversations and use questioning techniques that challenge the children's thinking.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children feel greatly valued because they are treated with lots of respect. All children are actively welcomed and participate fully in the nursery day. The staff team ensure each child takes a positive and active part in the daily routine by providing them with responsibilities such as passing round the fruit and counting out the lunch plates. This helps them feel very special and important. The ethos of the centre successfully encourages the children to respect their environment and their friends. Children have an exceptional understanding about their own lives and others, because the centre year is planned around the seasons symbolised by various religious festivals. Children hear stories and songs to represent each festival and relish taking part in planned activities, as well as events organised by the university, to fully enhance their appreciation for each individual's uniqueness. This positive approach fosters the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully integrated within the setting. Comprehensive observations, educational plans and strong links with other professionals ensure that the staff team have a complete understanding of the child's needs and a highly efficient support structure to effectively assist each child to progress to the next steps in their stages of learning.

Children behave extremely well. The extremely calm and patient approach implemented by the staff team helps the children clearly understand right from wrong and the consequences of their actions. This enables them to begin to manage their own behaviour and emotions. Children completely understand the daily routine as they pick up on the cues of a practitioner quietly singing to indicate the transition between activities.

Parents complete a very comprehensive form on entry that details all the children's likes, dislikes, their habits and family history. This helps the staff have a full understanding of the children and their individual personalities. Parents are exceedingly well informed. They are provided with a detailed handbook that contains a range of policies and procedures and explains the Steiner principle as well as menus and the timetable. Weekly plans are displayed and regular open days contribute to strong partnerships with parents. Partnerships with parents and carers of children who receive Nursery education is outstanding. Parents contribute to the initial assessment to establish their child's starting points and have open access to the children's files and receive annual reports detailing their children's progress. They are informed about the

Foundation Stage curriculum at parents evenings and are invited to view their children's profiles and discuss their progress along the stepping stones whenever they wish.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting is very well organised. The staff team work exceptionally well as a cohesive team to prioritise the children's welfare. They are led by an exceedingly efficient management team who are committed to continually monitoring and reflecting on the service provided. This ensures that weaknesses are identified and addressed quickly through staff training, one to one and team meetings. The staff team previously worked together at another setting and show a high level of commitment to continuing their own personal and professional development including their understanding and implementation of the Steiner philosophy. Strong leadership by a highly qualified manager ensures that the provision strives to provide a consistently high quality of education and care.

The leadership and management of nursery education is outstanding. The curriculum is introduced to the children through an integrated approach that helps them develop their skills and work towards the early learning goals through their own first hand experiences.

Small group sizes ensure that ratios are met at all times. All required documentation to support the children's well being is in place and maintained appropriately. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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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):

- develop systems for risk assessing the environment more effectively

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