

# Armathwaite Nursery Group

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY241621
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 May 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Andrea, Marie Paulson
<b>Setting Address</b>	The Playhouse, Station Road, Armathwaite, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA4 9PW
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<b>Registered person</b>	Armathwaite Nursery Group
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

Armathwaite Nursery Group opened in 1974. It is a committee-run facility. It operates from two rooms of a purpose-built, single storey building adjoining Armathwaite School in the village of Armathwaite. Armathwaite Nursery Group serves the village and the surrounding area.

There are currently 36 children aged from two to four years on roll, including 26 children who receive nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The group opens five mornings a week during school term times, and sessions are from 09.15 until 11.45.

The nursery employs seven staff who work with the children, all of whom have a childcare qualification. The setting works closely with the school, local community and Foundation Stage advisory teachers.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy through the consistent and meaningful promotion of healthy food and physical activities. Their individual needs are met well through staff and parents working closely to discuss and record any needs such as diets and allergies. Accident and incident records are well maintained and parental consents are in place.

Children rest in quiet areas such as the book corner, which is carpeted and has comfortable cushions within a partitioned part of the play room. They enjoy much physical outdoor activity to develop good coordination and strength. Children enjoy the well-used outdoor area which is made into a fun and stimulating play area. They enjoy riding around the track, balancing on stilts, practising basketball and digging. Children also use the school field and playground as they run around and play with resources such as balls and hoops.

Indoors, the children have much freedom of movement around the play areas. They dance and move to action songs such as 'copy cat' and participate well as they enjoy jumping, making windmill movements and stretching. Children's manipulation skills are consistently promoted as they use tools with increasing ability. They plant seeds, use scissors and crayons, thread beads and make models out of play dough and junk materials.

Children learn about keeping themselves well and their environment clean as they follow mostly sound health and hygiene practices, such as washing their hands when 'sticky with paint'. A minor exception is that children share a towel instead of having separate hand drying facilities to minimise the risk of infection. Children know this routine well and follow it, often without a reminder. They know to wear hats outside on a sunny day and benefit from the shade provided in the outdoor area. Children are asked 'do you need your coat on?' to make them more aware of how to keep warm. They are encouraged to put on coats and shoes themselves. Children are, therefore, becoming increasingly aware and able to look after themselves.

Children are encouraged to enjoy healthy food. Snacks are provided, when children choose milk or juice and have fruit, biscuits and yoghurt. Healthy eating patterns are encouraged as children eat fruit before biscuits. Water is available throughout the session. Snack times are social, enjoyable occasions where staff and children sit together and good manners are encouraged. Children take turns to help prepare the snacks, so further extending their awareness of nutritious food. They enjoy chatting with each other and adults as they eat, so encouraging social interaction.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept generally safe and secure through some consistent, effective practices in place such as the well organised collection of children by parents and carers. Risk assessments mostly identify and resolve hazards to children. Exceptions to this are the door to the outdoor play area which is not fastened, there is no safety mat at the bottom of the indoor slide and the emergency evacuation is not practised regularly enough for children to become familiar with the procedure.

Children have much freedom of movement within a safe, enclosed outdoor area. They learn how to negotiate paths with the ride-on toys. They are relaxed and have fun as they move

freely around the well organised playroom. Children are kept continuously safe during the session with several practical safety procedures followed such as carrying plates carefully at snack time and not running indoors. They learn through topic activities, such as 'water', the value of life-jackets and put helmets on to ride the wheeled toys outside. Children are, in this way, learning to look after themselves. A minor exception is that children are not always encouraged to find individual space during action games to further avoid accidents. The effective supervision and deployment of staff, however, contributes greatly to keeping children safe in a secure environment so that they play confidently and enjoy resources that are kept in good condition.

Staff have a sound knowledge of child protection issues though training, supported by nursery policies and procedures. The designated person is the manager who has clear awareness of the responsibilities and action to take in a child protection situation. Children's safety is, therefore, further safeguarded.

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

The provision is good.

Children are eager and well motivated in this good example of continuous provision. The creative use of free-flow between indoor and outdoor activities is well organised and results in children being engrossed in meaningful, stimulating activity. They are keen to participate as they help themselves to water from the outdoor tap and water the plants that they are growing. Children enjoy their time at the nursery and the exciting experiences available to them. They feel welcome in the nursery as they are warmly greeted into a nurturing environment by the friendly and professional staff team.

Staff are actively involved with the children throughout the day. They are skilful in encouraging children's independence, for instance, in choosing activities and in offering support for craft activities. Staff introduce new activities well. They talk to children about the topic and add meaning through practical activities such as soaking cotton wool with water to explain about raindrops. A wide range of imaginative and stimulating activities promotes children's overall development. Children's individual progress is monitored continuously. Children are surrounded by bright, colourful displays, including topics such as 'under the sea', with much of their own work contributing to the stimulating learning environment.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff understand children's developmental needs and provide a wide range of activities and experiences to move them on. They create a well presented and stimulating environment in which children can explore and investigate at a pace that suits them and enables them to make progress in their learning. Staff are very gentle in their approach to children. They support and guide them when necessary in a way that does not disturb or interrupt their play, allowing children to work through their own challenges. Staff use skilful questioning to promote children's thought processes such as 'what do you need to do now?' when working out how to assemble a junk model. They encourage children to recall previous activities, such as 'can you remember what we planted?' Staff encourage children to work problems out by themselves, for example, completing a floor jigsaw and comparing pieces to the whole picture on the cover. The links made with the topic through various activities are particularly strong to reinforce learning, for instance as part of the 'water' topic.

Planning for the nursery clearly shows how staff make strong links with the Foundation Stage early learning goals. Activities are provided that enable children to make good progress in the six areas of learning. Staff make regular, close observations of the children whilst at play. The observations are shared between key workers, used to inform planning and to introduce children to further activities or tasks that will help them to progress.

Children develop growing levels of independence and self-confidence. A wide range of interesting resources are easily accessible to them throughout the setting. They independently collect their self-chosen activities and concentrate for long periods of time until they have achieved their aim, for instance, when filling up various containers with foamy water. They work alone, alongside others, and cooperatively in small groups. Children are keen to try new experiences such as 'splatter painting' using sieves and kitchen brushes.

Children learn to take care of their environment. They understand how things grow and how to care for living things. This area is a particular strength of the nursery. Children grow various plants and vegetables, take turns to look after the hamster, learn about creatures 'under the sea' and how a chrysalis develops into a butterfly. They learn how magnets stick to metal such as paper clips when 'fishing', and learn about the daily weather. The story of the 'rain drop' is made more meaningful to children through practical activities and stories. Children show interest in the way things work, such as when exploring the propeller on a toy in the water tray, and are developing mouse and keyboard skills on the computer.

Children engage in much imaginary play when they pretend to be animals moving around the room and moving their arms as windmills. They have many opportunities to express with paint at the painting easel, to draw pictures using pencils and use the wipeable boards indoors and outdoors. They begin to learn letter and number shapes and some can draw these independently for themselves. They recognise their own names when they use individually named trays and have big books which record their activities. Children learn new words such as 'evaporation' and enjoy listening to stories in small groups, or accessing books independently from the book area. They turn the pages carefully, look at pictures and recognise that print carries meaning, which children develop using writing tools in the play areas. Staff are quick to build on children's experiences to add meaning, such as providing materials when a child wanted to make a welcome card for the new baby.

An imaginative range of equipment and resources introduce children to mathematical concepts such as measures, shapes, order and size. Children use mathematical language in play, for example, a child recognising he is 'as tall as' another. Their learning is reinforced as they weigh conkers, pour water into containers of varied sizes and shapes, and count the number of girls and boys at snack time. There are fewer opportunities to practise early calculating skills such as 'how many more' and 'how many are left?' Children recognise a circle shape and try to spot similar shapes within the play room.

Children's creative development is a strength of the nursery, with children using an extensive range of materials. The sensory development is particularly strong through the exceptional resources provided. Staff encourage children to use their senses as they listen to 'loud and soft' music, feel whether the sponge is 'hard or soft', feel if the cotton wool is 'light and fluffy' or 'wet and heavy'. The outdoor area has added interest, for instance, with the mobiles and strips of material tied to the fences to blow in the wind. Children think about their feelings with a story about 'it's lovely when you smile', making facial expressions pretending to be 'cross, grumpy, and surprised'.

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

The provision is good.

Children access a good range of resources to learn through practical play about different cultures and the wider world through festivals, musical instruments, books and wall displays. Visitors from other continents share their dance and music cultures. Children learn words from another language as they greet each other in French and Welsh. They become aware of their own culture as they explore topics such as Hallowe'en, visit community amenities such as the police station and create 'all about me' books.

Staff have good knowledge of the children as individuals so that their needs are met well. The staff group uses skills and experience to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities when appropriate. They have experience of working closely with parents and the appropriate professional support network. This is a strength of the nursery. The sensory development resources are exceptional and can be accessed by all children. Children become aware of considering others and how to help when fundraising for the 'Pudsy Bear' and 'Little Hearts Matter' charities. They also have visits to the nursery by 'Dogs for the Blind' to further increase their awareness. Resources and activities are equally accessible to every child and the premises has good wheelchair access and much open space indoors. All children, therefore, take an active part in the nursery.

Children respond well to the calm and consistent staff, who are effective role models in promoting good manners and considering others. They learn to be responsible when sharing tidying up tasks. Children know that they and their work are valued, with much praise and encouragement given for helping out, listening well and making pictures and models. They learn to be considerate through effective behaviour management techniques used by skilful staff, for instance, they know to sit down so that children behind can see the book at story time. Staff use effective techniques such as 'stop and listen' to gain their attention, by ringing a bell to warn that the activity is to end soon and by saying 'when you look at me I know you are listening.' Children are settled well, happy and learning to be confident in a busy and friendly atmosphere. They are very well behaved and have much fun playing with each other, especially during role play in the home corner.

Partnerships with parents and carers is good. Parents are involved in several ways and have effective home to nursery links in place. The nursery is an integral part of the community with parents also on the committee and close links with the school and local amenities. Parents are kept well informed of the topics and activities. Children are, therefore, more able to continue the topic at home, for instance, by bringing in a natural sponge as part of the water topic. The well organised reception area has useful information which includes photographs of activities based on the Foundation Stage areas of learning. The display is less clear in informing parents of the value of what the children gain from such activities.

Parents are made welcome in the nursery where they can talk informally with staff or have a private meeting. Children have 'big books' which are shared with parents about the activities done. Children take turns to look after the hamster at weekends, and to take 'Bertie Bear' home for the week, when parents contribute to a diary. Parents and carers spoken with are very positive about the care, the approachability of the staff and how happy the children are to attend. They know who the key workers are and the nursery's own questionnaires for parents refer to 'dedicated and caring staff'.

The required policies are in place and are generally comprehensive, the exception being the complaints policy, which is not up to date with recent regulations about informing parents that they can see a complaints record. Parental consents are also in place as part of a thorough system to ensure that each child receives appropriate care. The partnership between parents and the nursery is well promoted and supports the continuing well-being of children attending.

The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Staff members are all qualified, experienced and show commitment in attending further training to further develop their knowledge, so demonstrating that children are cared for by staff who have a high regard for their well-being. The provision is effectively organised so that all children take an active part as they move freely around and choose from the exciting activities available, both indoors and outdoors. Children are welcomed into a bright and colourful environment with many stimulating displays, such as 'under the sea', which include their own work. Staff are skilful at adapting resources such as the use of the climbing frame to 'fish' with magnets. Children settle well into a familiar routine, made possible by staff working closely to ensure the smooth running of the session.

The system for monitoring staff checks is well organised and confidential. Children are effectively supervised throughout the session through good deployment and supervision skills of staff members. The daily records are up to date, parental consents are in place and individual details are recorded to support continuity of care for all the children. The policies and procedures are generally implemented well so that children's overall development is promoted in a stimulating, friendly, safe environment. Children's needs are known and recorded through efficient systems which are regularly reviewed. Parents have access to the policies and procedures, further promoting good relationships.

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

Leadership and management are good. The manager is qualified in early years childcare and education and has many years experience of caring for children and working with parents. Staff members are conscientious in maintaining a high quality of learning for the children as shown through attendance at additional training to keep updated. The manager leads and closely supports the highly skilled staff so that all children benefit. Staff support includes induction, appraisal and an ongoing training programme. Staff have weekly meetings to share information and plan ahead. They work closely each day in noting observations and sharing them with key workers so that each child's progress is well monitored.

The activities and resources are closely linked to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the nursery education areas of learning, of which the manager and staff have good knowledge. They work together to create a welcoming and stimulating environment. There is a clear management structure with committee members and staff being well aware of their responsibilities and sharing a common aim of providing good quality care and learning for children. The management of the nursery is supported well by a strong, active committee and effective administrative support.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the previous inspection the nursery was recommended to extend the risk assessments for the rooms used. The nursery has achieved this so that the level of safety for the children has improved.

The nursery needed to extend nursery education to include more references to time and to increase the choice of free play for the children. The planning takes this into account so that the children benefit from a well balanced delivery of the learning areas, and have more opportunities to make choices and decisions during free play.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection 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):

- provide children with separate hand drying facilities
- consider how to fasten the door to the outdoor play area, make the indoor slide safer and organise action songs and games so that children have sufficient personal space
- practise the emergency evacuation regularly enough for children to be familiar with the procedure
- update the complaints policy to include recent regulations about informing parents that they can request to see a complaints record.

#### **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):

- consider reviewing the photo display of activities to make it more clear to parents about the link to the learning areas and the effect on children's development
- provide more practical opportunities for children to practise early calculating 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)