

The Gower School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	131690
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Inspector	Kanwal Sonia Lobo
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Gower School has been registered since 2000. It is a privately run organisation and operates from a two storey building, situated near to Caledonian Road tube station in the London Borough of Islington. The school is self contained and has access to six classrooms, office, kitchen, staff room, laundry room, music room, reception areas, staff and children's toilet facilities; including a disabled toilet and a fully enclosed outside play area. The setting serves the local community and beyond.

There are currently 111 children on roll aged from three months to five years, of whom many attend a variety of sessions each week. This includes 32 funded three year olds and nine funded four year olds. The school currently has four children attending who speak English as an additional language and at present they do not have any children attending with special educational needs. There are number of older children who also attend the setting.

The group opens five days a week during term time for 48 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 09:00 to 18:30.

23 full time staff work directly with the children, of whom 16 staff hold recognised childcare qualifications, ranging from Montessori, NNEB's and NVQ level 3.

The principal has recently been awarded Early Years professional status. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The school uses the Montessori method of teaching combined with traditional early years practices. The setting has achieved the 'Raising Quality' award, the Islington Early Years Assurance mark, an Investors in Children accredited quality assurance scheme. The school has successfully completed the Tiny Talk Nursery Programme for Baby Signing and is an accredited baby signing nursery. The Gower School is committed to reducing its impact on the environment and has attained the Green Mark Award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. There are some good procedures in place that prevent the spread of infection such as, staff wearing gloves when nappy changing and wiping tables diligently just before children have their meals.

Children are beginning to realise the importance of hand washing at relevant times in the day. However they do not always understand the connection between good health and hygiene. This is because hand washing is not always done just before they eat, consequently they are not supported to understand why they need to.

Children receive suitable first aid treatment in the event of an accident as several staff hold valid first aid certificates. The first aid boxes are well stocked and the record of accidents is well maintained. In the event children are sick or infectious they are encouraged not to attend as clear information is shared with parents to help prevent the spread of infections. All relevant policies and procedures are in place for the administration of medication.

Healthy eating is given high priority as meals are planned in consultation with parents, taking account of a variety of nutritious foods and children's individual dietary needs.

Children enjoy a range of freshly prepared vegetarian meals which are made on site. They eat well and report on how 'yummy' the penne and rice pudding is. Children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the day and help themselves to a drink whenever they are thirsty.

Children have lots of chances to play outside in the fresh air. The variety of outdoor play opportunities enables them to develop and refine their small and large motor skills as they, for example, run, peddle and play with water.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are protected from strangers by monitoring access to the provision. Parents and visitors are identified and permitted into the nursery through the entry phone system in place. Procedures are in place which ensure consistent use of the visitors' book is made. There is record of attendance for staff and children which includes the times of their arrival and departure.

The premises are regularly risk assessed and as a result, children are less likely to be exposed to potential risks or hazards. However, staff are yet to make more effective use of the accident book in identifying the pattern of accidents, how these can be prevented in the future and incorporating the action taken to form part of the risk assessment document. Play equipment, toys and furniture are safe and in good condition. All children are able to help themselves to play equipment from low storage and use play materials at tables or on the floor safely.

Fire drills are currently practised periodically because the nursery recognises the need to give fire safety appropriate priority. This in turn, ensures the patterns of children's attendance is reflected so that everyone has sufficient and equal opportunities of learning how to respond in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Children are safeguarded through the sound knowledge staff have of child protection issues. There are clear and comprehensive procedures in place should they have a concern, such as completing the incident forms.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Babies are supported to feel safe and secure. They thrive in an exciting and stimulating environment which has a host of opportunities for them to engage with adults and other babies.

They have lots of chances to move freely and access resources for themselves. Many babies use the whole environment confidently and easily. They enjoy exploring some of the real and natural materials on offer. The babies are notably secure in their surroundings and well settled. There is a high level of physical and cognitive participation and their interest is sustained for a significant length of time particularly during the music session. They clap and laugh with the staff as they sing their favourite songs namely the 'Hokey Kokey' and delight as they bang the drums. Babies are learning about sign language as staff use words and signing to communicate. Staff assess children's progress using the Birth to three matters framework but it is yet to be used when planning activities.

Children in the toddler room are engaged in a variety of tasks that offer some interesting and stimulating challenges. They have lots of chances to express their creativity as they use glitter, glue and crayons. The toddlers enjoy singing action rhymes such as the 'rocket song'. They make gestures, pointing to the sky and tell staff 'it's up there'. They are learning about the natural world, many can name and talk about different animals as they play with them in the trough of shredded paper. Children are developing their hand eye coordination well as they are involved in spooning, using tongs, pegging and threading. Outside they play with water and have fun as they pour it from one container to another. They use the funnels and tubes to explore the water and enjoy navigating the boats around.

Nursery Education.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children have many chances to strengthen their self help skills and foster their independence effectively during play. This is because the environment is carefully planned to promote informed choices and enable them to use their own initiative. Children talk confidently to staff and their peers. They are keen to learn about the sea creatures and watch David Attenborough's 'Blue Planet' with great enthusiasm. Their learning has been further extended by visiting the London

Aquarium. There are extensive opportunities for children to write for a purpose and some are beginning to write their own names. The resources are labelled to help them understand that text carries meaning. Children are eager to talk about themselves, their families and homes. They recall past events and share their experiences of being on the London Eye and seeing Big Ben. There are some opportunities for children to learn about everyday technology as they spend some time at the computer. However there are fewer chances for them to explore information, communication and technology as resources, such as programmable toys are limited and not used to form an integral part of their everyday learning and experiences. Children learn to count through a range of practical activities and some of them can count accurately up to 10 and beyond. Children measure, talk about size and sort during practical activities. Children are actively involved in recycling food and paper. They take responsibility for the left over food from lunch and put it in the recycling container. Children's contributions are valued as staff share a child's idea to water the plants with the left over water in their drinking bottles. Children are able to skilfully negotiate the space around them as they cycle and climb.

Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum as they have attended training to update their knowledge and skills. As a result, children are involved in activities that cover all areas of learning. Planning and assessments are in place but observations are yet to be completed consistently across all six areas of learning. Children benefit from being visited at home by their key workers who get to know them and find out about their care issues and interests. Staff build on this information very well to provide appropriate opportunities. However, their starting points are not clearly identified and consequently building on their areas of development and charting progress with regards to learning during the settling in period is more difficult to establish.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are confident and secure in their environment because they feel a sense of belonging. They are making a positive contribution as the setting recognises the uniqueness of each child.

Children from different backgrounds and cultures work and play in harmony. There is a strong focus on the development of their self esteem and, as a result, their confidence grows as they progress through the nursery. As one child shares his visit to Ghana, his experience is celebrated by the whole group as they plan activities and raise awareness of the country and its culture. This supportive atmosphere enables children to gain a better understanding of the wider world. As a result, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Strategies to support children with disabilities include the use of review meetings and individual education plans. This helps to ensure individual targets are met and later difficulties are avoided. The SENCO works closely with the inclusion team at Islington. The setting uses an inclusive approach which enables children to feel part of the group and secure in their surroundings.

Children are learning to understand their feelings. They behave well and respond positively to staff because of the warm sensitive interaction they receive. The appropriate use of levels of praise and encouragement for their achievements reinforces their good behaviour. They receive useful chances throughout the session to learn to manage their own behaviour. Positive attitudes are formed as a result of the consistent use of explanations they are given which helps them to distinguish the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Partnership with parents is good.

Children's individual needs are documented well and the successful implementation of the key worker system ensures information is continually exchanged and shared. Parents and key workers make effective use of the 'daily diary' and weekly report cards which keeps everyone up-to-date with the child's progress.

Children's developmental records are available for parents to view upon request outside of the programmed parents' evening. Parents receive reports twice a year which detail the progress and development their child is making. Although there is a complaints procedure, it is not yet in line with current legislation.

Children receiving funding benefit from the nursery providing parents with useful information, such as the leaflet outlining the Foundation Stage curriculum. They have the opportunity to attend monthly parents' information sessions which helps to raise their awareness of the curriculum. Staff are yet to work more closely with the parents to ensure they obtain the children's starting points in their learning so that these can be used to inform future planning and assessments.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are comfortable and confident in a setting that is well organised. They are secure in an environment which fosters a well established and strong staff team that work closely together to ensure they deliver the routines smoothly. Staff create a very welcoming and homely atmosphere in which all children are equally well cared for and have many opportunities to succeed. Information about the children's needs and progress flows well between home and nursery. The impact is seen in the sound and improving progress made by most children, in their sense of security and well-being.

Leadership and management of the setting is good.

There are some effective systems which ensure all the required policies and procedures are in place for the safe and efficient management of the provision. All staff are vetted and the management structure has a thorough recruitment process in place.

The manager and staff are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and meet regularly to evaluate and improve the service provided by the nursery. Consequently they have made good improvements since the last inspection. This has also led to recent discussions regarding the need to plan using the Birth to three matters for children under three years.

The manager and staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Therefore, they are able to plan a good range of stimulating and challenging opportunities to support children's learning. However, systems are evolving to ensure staff plan, observe and assess consistently across all six areas of learning.

The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, three recommendations were raised for care and nursery education. The provider was required to consolidate Montessori and Foundation Stage plans to allow more consistent support when using specialist equipment or mainstream resources, in particular to support the integration of learning into children's play, to make the wide opening window in

the ground floor classroom safe or inaccessible to children and to ensure written documentation of the daily attendance register for children contains all required details and the equal opportunities policy is in line with legislation. The setting plans for children using the Montessori curriculum to reach the requirements of the Foundation Stage. They are in the process of updating all the children's records in line with the stepping stones and the new Early Years Foundation Stage. Children's safety has improved through the setting, ensuring that the window on the ground floor is no longer accessible. The daily attendance register for children now includes both times of arrival and departure and the equal opportunities policy is in line with current legislation. This has had a positive impact on the children's overall safety, welfare and development.

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

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- improve children's understanding of the connection between good health and hygiene.
- make more effective use of the accident book in identifying the pattern of accidents, how these can be prevented and incorporate the action taken to form part of the risk assessment document.
- improve the planning for children under three by using, for example, the Birth to three matters framework.
- update the complaints procedure to reflect the changes in line with legislation.

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):

- enhance the systems in place for the recording of children assessments so that observations are completed consistently across all six areas of learning.

- identify children's starting points in order to build on their individual areas of development and use these to inform future planning and assessments.
- improve children's chances to learn about everyday information, communication technology.

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