

# Shillington Under Fives

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY338822
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 May 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Paula Jane Hayhow
<b>Setting Address</b>	Shillington Lower School, Greenfields, Shillington, HITCHIN, Hertfordshire, SG5 3NX
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<b>Registered person</b>	Shillington Under Fives Committee
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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?

Shillington Under Fives has been at its present location since December 2006. It operates from one main room in a Portacabin in the grounds of Shillington Lower School, in the village of Shillington in Bedfordshire. It is run by a voluntary management committee.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the setting at any one time. It is open each weekday during term-time and sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45 and 12:45 to 15:15. There is also a lunch club which runs from 11:45 to 12:45. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

Children come from the local and wider community.

There are currently 37 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 30 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school is able to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs seven members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a recognised qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well-ordered and clean environment. They participate in a variety of physical activities which contribute to their good health. Good use is made of the outdoor play area, where children enjoy using the climbing frame, ride-on toys, smaller equipment such as balls and hoops and play co-operative games such as basketball and hopscotch. They also practise and improve their physical skills as they participate in activities such as music and movement sessions, action rhymes and parachute games. They demonstrate good control and skill in the use of small equipment such as pencils, glue spreaders, puzzles and play items. They use chopsticks where the children have learnt how to pick up noodles and strands of wool with some precision, thus aiding the development of their finer manipulative skills. Children demonstrate a good level of independence in their personal care, for example, helping themselves to drinks, using tissues, disposing of them correctly and visiting the bathroom independently. They regularly have opportunities to discuss the relevance of this with staff.

Children are well nourished and gain an appreciation of healthy eating through projects, displays and the choice of fresh ingredients at snack time, for example, cucumber, cheese, crackers, carrot sticks, toast and fruit. The group operate a snack bar system which allows children to come for their break when they wish, thus preventing them being disturbed in the middle of their play. They pour their own drinks and pass around the snack plate, which aids their independence. The staff use these social occasions to discuss the importance of healthy eating and discourage food high in fat, sugar and salt. The lunch club operates between the pre-school sessions and children eat their packed lunches which have been prepared by parents. These include an ice pack to prevent foods becoming unwholesome. The staff discuss individual dietary requirements with parents and keep an accurate record of these so that any particular needs of the children can be met. They involve parents and children in topics such as the need to use suntan cream, encouraging the children to gain an appreciation of why this is important and thus protecting them when playing in the sun. However, children's health could be affected as the first aid box contains few dressings and some of which are out of date and this could lead to a possible delay in treating a child effectively in the event of an accident.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where their work is displayed and resources are appealingly arranged and easily accessible. Toys are stored in units with pictures and labels relating to their contents, making it easy for children to find the play equipment they want. Children's safety is promoted by the group's supply of toys, resources and furniture that are appropriate for their size and developmental stage. Children independently select toys and activities from a range of good quality play materials which the staff regularly check, discarding or mending broken items and ensuring that they are both clean and safe. Children's welfare is further promoted as staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and have attended training to ensure that they are able to report and follow up any concerns.

Children's safety is given a high priority and staff carry out safety reviews daily, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. The children are therefore able to move independently, safely and confidently throughout the setting. However, their safety is affected as they have access to the uneven edging in the garden. The fire evacuation plan is not made

readily available throughout the premises, which could hinder a quick evacuation in event of a real fire. Children have a good understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves and others safe. They are consistently given clear explanations by staff and understand the importance of turn-taking, being careful when the floor has been splashed with water, pushing chairs under the table so children cannot trip and packing away the toys in order to prevent accidents.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled. There is a clear 'settling-in' process which is carried out at the child's and parents' pace and gives the key workers time to get to know the family and understand the children's particular needs and their ways of learning. They ensure that children have their comforters readily available whenever they need them, thus offering them secure support. Staff are calm and caring, planning stimulating themes and projects, ensuring that the children receive individual attention. The children come in eagerly and are keen to participate in the activities and play opportunities available. They are confident in their relationships with staff and are beginning to build relationships with each other, many having a particular friend. Their personal development and self-confidence are promoted through caring support and encouragement from staff.

Children are in a stimulating environment where they are able to easily access play resources and freely choose what activity they wish. They confidently make choices about their play and activities throughout the session. Staff are good at following the children's lead and make good use of open questions and discussions to encourage them to think. For example, when the children developed their own theme relating to pirates, they were encouraged to make maps, hats, swords and the pirate ship. These activities were carried out over a few days and encouraged the children to further extend their learning about this time in history. Children are able to participate in activities because the staff member adapts these to suit the individual needs of the children participating. An example of this is a staff member working with children making bees and butterflies for the frieze. They include reference books in this occupation, referring to and discussing what coloured stripes and markings the insects have. Some children could cut the different mediums out easily, some made recognisable patterns and others just enjoyed the gluing activity.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. They use appropriate teaching methods, for example, sitting with the children, discussing colour, shape and size of the play materials. This enables them to ensure that children spend their time purposefully and that all areas of the curriculum are covered. Staff are skilled in observing and monitoring the children throughout the session and there are not many missed opportunities to develop the children's learning. An example of this is children watching the toad spawn and tadpoles in the aquarium, identifying which ones had legs and which ones were the largest and smallest toads. When they asked where some of the toads had gone, the staff member developed their conversation to include the needs of the toads, their life cycle, where they live and how she had taken them to the local area suitable for toads.

Children's progress in all areas is balanced as staff use assessment methods which link the information gained from this to identify areas to be covered in future activities. However, some written assessments do not clearly show children's starting points, which could lead to a delay in highlighting potential areas of concern and assessing early progress. The planning and assessment documents do not consistently give sufficient detail to enable staff to adapt activities for the more and less-able children, which could lead to missed opportunities to promote and develop their knowledge and learning.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they participate in the wide range of activities. These include regular opportunities to participate in a variety of crafts, games, construction, imaginative play, physical play, music and weekly cooking sessions. They show a good awareness of their own needs and are able to meet these, for example, using the bathroom facilities independently, packing away the toys and pouring their own drinks when thirsty. Children's knowledge is further extended as they cover a variety of topics enabling them to look more closely at subjects such as 'growth' where they plant seedlings, make craft butterflies, caterpillars and bees for the wall collages. Their knowledge is further reinforced by first hand experiences such as nature walks, stories and garden hunts for bugs in the play area. They proudly show the woodlice and worms they have discovered but know that they must put them back for the insects to survive. They are gaining an awareness of their own culture and that of others through discussions and craft activities linked to festivals such as Diwali, Chinese New Year and Easter. Children participate in various activities such as large and small construction toys, puzzles and cutting, which improve early writing skills and hand-eye co-ordination. Children understand the use of technology through the use of table computers, cash registers, calculator and telephones. These are often used in play scenarios such as the bakers, green grocers and food take-away shop. This promotes children's understanding in a practical way.

Children enjoy stories and have a good understanding that print holds meaning, for example writing their names on their work, sentences regarding their play and writing the take-away orders. Children enjoy joining in with favourite songs, stories and rhymes and show an awareness of rhythm, for example, playing musical instruments and singing nursery rhymes. Children interact well with each other, confidently initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts, ideas and activities. Some examples of this are children reading books together, telling their friends about their doctor's visit or discussing the family cats, exchanging their names and idiosyncrasies. Children have a good understanding of the concept of numbers, for example, counting how many spoonfuls of margarine go into the biscuit mixture and discussing the size of the ingredient bags. They match the number of ounces to the number line in the room, stop the staff member when her scales have reached the appropriate number and can discuss weight in terms of lightest and heaviest ingredients. They understand and use positional and size language, for example, big, little, long, shortest, higher and lower, through activities such as the constructing of houses, towers and space rockets.

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

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed and respected as individuals. They are offered a wide range of opportunities and resources to promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. Themes such as 'going around the world' give children an appreciation of different traditions and customs in other countries. The children celebrate festivals and traditions connected with Chinese New Year, Easter, Diwali, Christmas and various special days such Bonfire Night, Pancake Day and Mother's Day. Visitors are encouraged into pre-school to talk to the children about their work, giving them an

understanding of the community, such as visits from the local police officer, nurse, paramedic and the keeper of owls, where the children thoroughly enjoy stroking, touching and listening to the birds. Children are kind and considerate to each other and to staff, making friends and including them in their games. They regularly invite them to play with the bricks, making houses and gardens together, share out the play dough and asking politely for help to put aprons on remembering to say thank you for the support. Their behaviour is good throughout the session as they are beginning to independently organise turn-taking and sharing. For example, having enjoyed discovering that squeezing water out of the sponge sent it spraying into the water tray, a child wants his friend to try it and they both laugh together at their discovery. The children respond well to staff and the positive approach and good staff role modelling promotes good behaviour and good manners such as helping to pack away the toys and remembering to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are kept well informed of the group's procedures and practices through an informative prospectus, welcome pack, parents' notice boards and thorough discussions with key worker staff. This ensures that parents understand the setting and how their children will access the play and learning and enjoy their time in the group. The parents and key worker have a productive relationship, where staff inform parents of their child's activities through the session and seek feedback from parents through daily dialogue. There are clear and thorough systems in place for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a clear, practical policy relating to this. Two staff members have attended additional training relating to this and have implemented, and worked sensitively with individual children and their parents to make sure that all are included in the activities and routines.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. There is a strong commitment to involving parents fully in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through daily dialogue, a newsletter, an informative parents' notice board area and open afternoons. The parents' notice board contains information about a number of issues including the Curriculum for the foundation stage and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Further information is available around the play room in the designated areas, which documents what skills can be developed and includes children's photographs relating to the differing aspects of learning. This provides the parents with a fuller understanding of the learning which can be developed through play. The setting actively seeks feedback from parents and has provided an accessible suggestion box and undertakes regular questionnaires on various pre-school subjects. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and high quality care is provided for each child.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Overall the needs of the children are met. Children's care is fostered by the good team work provided by experienced and qualified staff and the dedicated assistance given by the voluntary parents' committee. They ensure that all areas of the pre-school are running well and that staff feel fully supported. There are robust procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. There is a clear staff induction process, regular appraisals and three weekly staff meetings which ensures that the pre-school policies and procedures are understood and consistently applied.

Children's play opportunities are enhanced by the good organisation of space, allowing them the freedom to move safely and independently indoors or out and from one activity to another.

This ensures that they feel confident to determine their own play and learning. The staff have organized the play room to ensure that children are provided with many learning experiences. For example, children have space for messy play, floor activities, table toys and a large well-stocked garden. This allows children the space and freedom to choose activities such as the home corner, active games such as hopscotch or quiet activities such as reading books or cooking biscuits.

The leadership and management is good. Children's learning and development is promoted and their overall welfare improved by the clear understanding that the play leader has of her role and responsibilities. She ensures that all policies and procedures are adhered to, aiding the committee in reviewing them when new legislation and changes to practice occur. The play leader frequently monitors the group's daily practice through check lists, reviewing action plans and observations of the play sessions. She fully includes staff members in the planning and organisation of these sessions benefiting from their particular skills and knowledge. There is a strong commitment to training and new ways of working, and this develops staff's skills and expertise. The group actively promotes a strong relationship with the local school through regular visits from the reception teachers, sending children's folders with them when they start school and having use of the school playing area accustomising the children to the next step in their lives, going to school. All sessions are well planned, with a balanced range of activities throughout the week. Children are always given sufficient time and resources to complete their activities and tasks. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments and monitoring. Staff pay attention when planning future work, ensuring that the needs of individuals are met and the development of all children is promoted.

#### **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.

### **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

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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):

- ensure that the contents of the first aid box are checked frequently and replaced as necessary
- improve the daily risk assessment to include areas such as the uneven edging in the garden and improve the fire policy by ensuring all persons are made aware of the fire evacuation procedure.

### **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):

- develop methods for assessing children so that these show their starting point so that progress can be charted and any issues highlighted at an early stage
- continue to develop the activity planning procedure so that this clearly and consistently demonstrates how the activity will be adapted for the more-able and less-able child and how this information will feed future planning.

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)