

Small Wonders

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	141780
Inspection date	30 October 2007
Inspector	Bamber Loizou
Setting Address	Crownhill Meeting Place, Lennon Drive, Crownhill, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK8 0AS
Telephone number	01908 263995
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Registered person	Small Wonders
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?

Small Wonders pre-school is a charity funded community group managed by a committee of volunteers. The group runs in the council owned Crownhill community hall in a residential area of Milton Keynes. The community hall comprises a large hall, kitchen and toilets and there are both indoor and outdoor storage facilities. A small enclosed area adjacent to the community hall is used for outside play.

The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:30 to 12:00 and has extended its provision to full day care since the last inspection to include afternoon sessions from 12.30 to 14.30. Parents and carers can choose to have either part-time or full day care.

Small Wonders is registered to accept a maximum of 30 children, at any one time. There are currently 27 children on roll, seven of these are aged under three years and 17 children are in receipt of nursery education funding.

The pre-school currently support children with learning difficulties and /or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language. Five full-time members of staff work with the children, who all have appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are making good progress, learning how they can keep themselves healthy. Children know why they must wash their hands after going to the toilet. Staff hygienically clean table mats for each group at snack time and use disposable gloves and aprons. Staff routinely clean and maintain the hall and outdoor area. Children are sometimes asked to help when clearing away, but this is not consistently practice. This means there are missed opportunities to involve the children to enhance their understanding of maintaining a clean and healthy environment.

Most staff are first aid trained and there are good procedures to ensure that accidents are dealt with effectively. First aid resources are always within easy reach for the adults. The management committee ensures that appropriate training is undertaken. Effective procedures enable staff to record accidents and incidents accurately so these can be reported to parents and enhance continuity of care.

Children enjoy healthy snacks and know that fruit is good for them. Families who choose to have their children stay for both morning and afternoon sessions provide lunch boxes for their children. These include fruit and vegetables, although some have biscuits and crisps. The children have a choice of water or milk during snack times, and the staff encourage them to pour their choice of drink into their own cup and this promotes independence successfully.

Children take part in a good range of daily physical activities in both indoor and outdoor areas. The large spacious hall and outdoor hard play area are used well for children to enjoy playing on larger apparatus that supports their physical development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are vigilant about keeping children safe and take good care to minimise risks. Children are made to feel welcome in a warm and friendly environment. There are clearly defined work and play areas for the children, as well as secure areas fenced off to prevent access to the office and storage areas. Fire practice and emergency evacuation are rehearsed systematically to ensure that the children and all adults are familiar with safety procedures.

There are good sight lines which help the staff to supervise all the children without children feeling that their independence is limited. Robust and systematic risk assessments of areas and resources are undertaken before each activity. The children are reminded about playing happily and sensibly together. Staff set high expectations for behaviour and movement around the setting and the children respond well to these.

Resources are bright and colourful and kept in good clean condition. They are set out to allow children free and safe movement around the setting. The children also play in safe, secure indoor and outdoor areas. The children have easy access to all resources which, regardless of background, age or ability, are suitable for all the children.

The staff work as a team and communicate well to benefit the children. They attend child protection training, which means they understand their role in relation to the setting's child protection policy. Appropriate cover and staff children ratios are adhered to at all times.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school. The staff provide a warm welcome to parents and children each morning. This helps the children to settle quickly. There is a very good range of resources and activities set out ready to capture their interest right from the start. The talented staff team ensure that concerns raised by parents are followed up and the children are happy. The system of key workers works very well because the children know who to turn to if they are upset or need support.

The staff provide a good balance of activities and opportunities for the children to freely choose which area they wish to work in during different parts of the day. Both indoor and outdoor areas are used well and spark the children's interests and curiosity. There is a good range of challenging problem solving activities outdoors. For example, they enjoy negotiating how best to use a simple pulley system to lift objects or investigate how water moves down a chute. These successfully develop the children's early mathematical, language, science and technology skills as well as their knowledge of the world around them.

Children's creative and imaginative development is promoted well through activities such as painting, modelling and sculpting using a range of materials. Group singing, role play and dance are well planned to provide many creative opportunities for the children to express themselves and to work cooperatively with other children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children achieve well in this good pre-school setting. They develop good personal qualities, behave well and treat other children and adults with respect and courtesy. The staff provide high quality role models and are always positive and supportive. This is of enormous benefit to the children as they are encouraged to interact successfully with others and develop valuable social skills. Consequently, the children are confident and enjoy their time in the pre-school very much. They happily talk to others about their families and friends.

The staff are well qualified and have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage. They have established good assessment systems to help them monitor and check the children's development through the stepping stones. Early assessments of the children on entry to the pre-school and discussions with parents and carers help the staff to assess children's starting points in each area of learning. This, together with useful observations, helps the staff to plan the next steps in the children's learning.

Activities are carefully planned and tailored to meet the needs of all the children. The staff team are attentive at all times to ensure that the children are suitably engaged in each activity. There is a good balance of directed activities supervised by adults and opportunities for the children to choose for themselves in both indoor and outdoor areas. At the end of the morning session, all the children come together for a focussed reading and phonic session, for example, for sounding out letter sounds using songs and nursery rhymes, and for mathematics and number recognition work. This is a well planned and effective session for most children, but some of the younger and less mature children find it difficult to settle and sustain their concentration in such a large group.

Children recognise their name cards or the colour of their card when entering the setting each morning. Staff help them to sound out the first letter of their name as they place the card on

a special registration board. The children have many opportunities to write their names or to draw pictures. They are helped to hold pencils and crayons correctly which supports the development of their early writing and fine motor skills. Many children are confident writers and happily talk about their work, for example, after drawing and writing a letter to a friend or family member. The staff have collected and organised a very good reading corner for the children so they have regular opportunities to handle books and to talk about stories and characters.

Children are beginning to identify and represent numbers using their fingers when singing songs and to count to 10 and beyond. Most of the children can recognise common familiar shapes and can sort colours, numbers and shapes when painting, drawing or using malleable materials such as porridge, paste and dough. They investigate measures and compare weights during stimulating outdoor problem solving as they pour water into containers or water chutes.

The children have many well planned opportunities to play with sand and water and to experiment with different materials when modelling. They use musical instruments and sing or listen to recorded music, exploring sound and rhythm. There are good opportunities to use a computer with the support of staff. The children learn and experience customs and cultures from around the world when celebrating festivals from different cultures or children's birthdays. There are well devised problem solving tasks and opportunities for the children to explore the world around them when they collect leaves or observe the way insects behave in the outdoor area. The staff take good care of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good balance of one-to-one and group support for these children that is successful in helping them to be fully included in all activities. As a result, there is good social inclusion throughout the setting.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a very positive approach to learning and form very good relationships. Children learn to respect other cultures through stimulating and enjoyable activities like tasting different foods and sweets from the Asian sub-continent. Books and resources reflect positive images of a multi-cultural society. The children learn to respect differences and the disabilities of others, especially when they work with visitors from the caring professions, such as nurses or health workers.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are monitored and supported closely. Good information is provided for parents in the form of records of achievement that helps them to understand how much progress their children are making. All children and families, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or those learning English as an additional language, make good progress and thrive in this supportive setting.

Children are secure and feel safe and are learning to take on responsibilities. However, there are sometimes missed opportunities to allow the children to take on further responsibility, for example, when tidying away, because the staff have not allowed sufficient time for this at the end of each session. Children show high levels of independence and can work alone or with others equally well.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They participate enthusiastically in all the activities provided by the staff and become enthusiastic learners. They form positive attitudes to others and cooperate well in small groups. They learn to share

and take turns and benefit from the excellent example set by the staff who are constantly supportive and positive about the children's efforts and contributions.

There is a good partnership with parents and the local community, and good links between the home and the pre-school setting. Parents are often invited to the setting to work with their children, including weekly parent and toddler sessions for under-threes to help them settle in the afternoons. Parents are fully aware of the complaints procedure and know how to make a complaint. The management committee takes full account of parents' views and this helps to inform the setting's operational development plan and policies. The partnership with parents and carers for nursery education is good. Parents receive excellent information about their children's progress and about events and special occasions. Information is always accessible and made clear to parents each day. Special open forums and meetings are arranged so parents can see the work that the children do and to talk through the development of their children with the staff. Parents are very pleased with their children's progress and development and they receive a good range of information through records of achievement and special meetings to see how well their children are doing.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Small Wonders is led and managed well by the setting's manager and the committee. There is regular and systematic self-evaluation undertaken by all staff and this accurate and effective in helping the setting to grow and develop further. Planning for improvement takes good account of the parents' and carers' views. A good range of monitoring of children's performance helps the staff to plan provision that meets the needs of all the children.

The skilful staff team take good care of the children and ensure that they are taught and supported in a safe, positive and secure environment. The staff are experienced and well qualified to care for children of this age range. They are an enthusiastic and committed team of professionals who value the children's contributions and are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Communication is excellent so that the staff are always questioning how best to improve further and set high expectations to continually provide good quality care and education for the children. Regular and systematic staff training helps them to update their knowledge and understanding of all aspects of early year's provision. Training courses include child protection, first aid, curriculum planning and the teaching of phonics, early reading and speech and language development.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. The staff are very committed to inclusion. The staff are attentive to the needs of every child, regardless of background or ability.

There are effective recruitment and induction procedures in place to ensure that people who work with children are suitable to do so. The management and staff are very good at recording and responding to complaints from parents and others. The complaints log is reviewed robustly and informs the setting's operational development plan. This forms part of the setting quality assurance procedures and demonstrate that the staff set high expectations and are continually striving towards improvement.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager and staff regularly monitor each area and there is a good range of peer monitoring so that the staff can share good practice. Staff regularly discuss and reflect on their practice. They are knowledgeable

about the Foundation Stage and use their observations and assessments of the children to check how well the children are progressing along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals.

The pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was required to ensure that written records of accidents contain all the correct details. This has been fully addressed and there are now much more effective systems to record incidents and accidents that ensure children are safe and well cared for at all times. There are also good arrangements to ensure that the children play outside safely. Staff have put in place effective supervision systems and improved activities so the children are fully aware of how to be safe and healthy. The nursery education provision has also improved well with many more opportunities for the children to express themselves creatively and imaginatively.

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 more opportunities for the children to take on responsibilities and to show initiative and independence, especially during clearing up times

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):

- improve the organisation of large group teaching and discussion sessions so that all children can participate fully.

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