

Learning Tree Childcare Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	309853
Inspection date	06 March 2008
Inspector	Debra, Elizabeth Mitcheson
Setting Address	Fulwood Campus, Fulwood, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 8UR
Telephone number	01772 225 550
E-mail	Ekay@preston.ac.uk
Registered person	The Governing Body of Preston College
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?

The Learning Tree Childcare Centre opened at this site in 2000. It operates from a purpose-built building with a number of base rooms. It is registered to provide a service for a maximum of 106 children of which no more than 24 can be under two years old, no more than 48 can be two years old, and no more than 35 can be aged five to seven years. The facility is open from 07.30 to 18.00. There is a fully enclosed grassed and soft play surface area for play. These areas are also utilised by school aged children before and after school and during school holidays. A staffroom, office and access to separate disabled toilet and storage facilities are also available.

Children attend a variety of sessions and the setting supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are 25 funded three- and four-year-olds. The provision is run by the governing body of Preston College and managed by a nursery manager and officer in charge. The staff team is available to work directly with the children because a catering manager, contract cleaner and administrator complement the staff team. All staff hold early years qualifications, with the majority at advanced level. The setting receives some input from the Teacher Training Team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children experience a setting where they are healthy and emotionally secure. This is a result of staff knowing the individual needs of the children in their care and how to provide an environment that is conducive to their care and education. The provision is clean as contract cleaners are employed to carry out heavy domestic duties, while nursery staff complete cleaning practices revolving around the children, for example, wearing protective clothing during the preparation of meals, stringent bathroom duties and nappy changing procedures. Children model some of these hygiene practices, which enables them learn the importance of their own personal hygiene. This is observed as children of all age groups reach for a tissue, without prompting, to wipe their nose and model staff as they wipe down the table and help tidy away plates and cutlery after lunch.

Children learn about the importance of healthy eating at meal times and enjoy their choice of hot buttered toast and milk at snack time, which adopts a cafeteria style approach. This ensures that children's activities are not disturbed and helps them develop their independence skills. Specially designed children's furnishings give children of all age groups the opportunity to dine with their peer group and participate in this very sociable occasion. Discussions about healthy eating develop as the children wait excitedly for their lunch of home made steak and mushroom pie with fresh vegetables, 'fruit whip' and water. Children with special dietary requirements are catered for and the option of 'butter pie' is well received by the children who follow a vegetarian diet. Meals are prepared and delivered by food wagon to the nursery from the adjoining college kitchens. The very enthusiastic catering manager explains how produce is used from local sources, ensuring choice and quality. She works in partnership with the childcare manager to ensure that meals are of nutritional value and take into account children's likes and dislikes, allergies and medical or religious requirements.

Children throughout the setting have the opportunity to take rest and sleep. Babies dictate their own routines which are embraced by the staff team. Children under two years use cots, a motorised rocker, a 'Bedouin tent' and individually named sleeping bags to take a well earned rest after a busy morning of activities. Older children have access to roll-out mattresses and a book corner, where they lie on scatter cushions.

Children develop a positive sense of well-being as staff provide a varied range of physical activities that encourages challenge and active participation. These enable the effective physical development of all age groups of children. Babies 'find their feet' as they pull themselves up from sitting with toys that aid their developing skills in walking. Older children move with confidence and safety during a physical game of 'shape traffic lights'. They run backwards and forwards and stop and start, carefully avoiding their peers as they search for coloured shapes displayed at various points of the outdoor play area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and adults are provided with a welcoming environment. The setting has been purposefully designed to provide a wide range of childcare provision for children aged from birth to 11 years. All rooms are brightly decorated and well ventilated with access to nappy changing facilities, toilets and their own outdoor play area. Storage is limited and staff are

creative in how they manage this and the structure of the playrooms. This includes the attractive organisation of toys and resources which enable children to explore and make their own choices in a variety of activities.

Children have access to an interesting range of toys, equipment and play materials that are both age and size appropriate. These also support the developmental needs of the range of children being cared for. Furnishings and equipment that encourage learning are in good condition and adhere to safety standards, for example, child-sized furnishings, toys, craft materials, large equipment to encourage physical activities and access to computers and software.

Users at this setting are generally safe and protected from hazards. This is because policies and procedures have been established to prioritise their safety most of the time. These include monthly fire drills, key pad security locks and closed-circuit television installed at the setting. Children are observed to take responsibility for their own safety. They tidy away toys before and after lunch and remind each other 'it is dangerous to swing back on your chair, because you could fall off and bang your head.' Children's welfare and safety are promoted at this setting's out of school provision, as rigorous risk assessments have been carried out in relation to children's safe delivery and collection to and from school. This includes stringent checks of the vehicle used to transport the children and additional escort staff on the collection journeys. However, the additional staffing is not adopted when children are being taken to school, which compromises children's safety.

All staff have a sound understanding of their roles in relation to the setting's child protection procedure as they have all completed safeguarding training. They understand the signs and symptoms of abuse and report any concerns to the designated child protection officer; or to the nursery manager or officer in charge, in their absence, who follow a reviewed and revised comprehensive child protection policy, in line with recent changes in regulation.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages thoroughly enjoy their time at this setting. Some children make it known to their parents that they do not want to go home because they are having so much fun. They separate with ease from their carers, and those who do not quickly settle with the reassurance of their key workers, who are observed to be sensitive to their needs.

Children have access to resources and activities that provide first hand experiences, allowing them to build on their natural curiosity as learners. These include treasure baskets, mobiles, soft toys, book corner, construction, home corner, dough, dressing up, outdoor play and focused activity of 'pasta play' and making raindrops from collage materials. Babies develop into competent learners and squeal with delight and wonder as they experiment with the soft pasta which they squeeze between their fingers and toes as they take their socks off. Children become skilful communicators as they show great imagination with small world toys. They engage in detailed conversation with staff about life on a pirate ship and imitate the motion of the sea with sound and movement as they tip the ship from side to side.

Children are making good progress in their physical, intellectual, emotional and social areas of development because staff have high expectations of what they can achieve. A key worker system enables them to get to know their children well. Ongoing observations are made to observe the child's development and impact on the implementation of the planned activities and play opportunities which assist children in making good progress in all aspects of their

learning. The emphasis for children attending the out of school provision is learning while having fun after a busy day at school. They are observed to have fun and engage in a wide range of activities such as pool, craft, construction and time limited sessions on console games.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a flexible approach to planning the day indoors and outdoors which maximises the opportunities for children to progress and enjoy their time. Staff show respect for and understanding of the role of the parent in their child's learning and give high priority to nurturing children's personal, social and emotional development.

Children are captivated by an extensive range of purposeful activities and recourses in relation to the Foundation Stage. They are eager to learn and self-assured in their play. They listen intently and follow stories about 'Shaggy dog and the terrible itch' and then show confidence in handling the book carefully before reciting some of the text by association with the pictures. They also recognise some familiar words such as 'a', saying 'that letter is the beginning of my name.' They extend this confidence and interest in information and communication technology as they have access to a television, video and DVD and can follow simple programs on the computer with good mouse control.

Children use marks readily to represent their ideas and older children are adept at writing their own names. Excellent use of visual symbols throughout the nursery enables children with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language to participate fully in the activities and develop to their own individual potential. They are extremely imaginative and use available resources to create props to support role play. Children wrap cot sheets around their shoulders as a cape and become Superman. They raise their hand towards the ceiling before flying off to 'save the world from evil.' In the home corner children show bodily awareness and differentiate between boys and girls as they observe body parts when dressing their babies in the home corner.

Children investigate what food they may receive for lunch as they use their sense of smell and memory, saying 'it smells like spaghetti bolognaise.' They make sense of the world around them as they participate in themed activities throughout the year which have included 'my family' and 'Arctic animals' where they show great interest in where they live and discuss the habitat of others. This interest is extended into a craft activity where they make three dimensional structures to produce their interpretation of a street scene of 'Balamory', a children's television programme.

Children work extremely well together and have developed strong friendships. They take turns, participate in board games and help each other in a baking activity where they gain confidence in using numbers and respond enthusiastically to challenges that extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills. Children count to ten with ease and begin to subtract as they participate in the rhyme 'five little speckled frogs'.

Teaching and learning is good as this well qualified and experienced staff team is perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play, and use questions very successfully to challenge their thinking and language skills. During a role play session children are asked, 'What clothes will the dolls will need in winter?' and, 'What do we need to remember when we are crossing the road?' Children react and point out that 'they will need warm clothing and food in their

tummy.' They say they would need to stop at the crossing and wait until it was safe to cross, and 'keep looking and listening for cars'.

Staff spend a great deal of time observing and monitoring children's achievements, and planning experiences that help children take the next step in their learning. They have devised a very comprehensive assessment and planning system. However, children's starting points are not specific in relation to their progress against the stepping stones and the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Partnership with parents and carers of the children in receipt of nursery education is good, as it is throughout the whole of the setting. Staff work closely with them to meet the individual needs of their child. New children complete 'All about me' books with their parents prior to being involved in introductory sessions. Good systems are in place for sharing information on the care and education for children and include daily discussion, a parents' brochure, newsletters distributed each term and noticeboards with relevant information regarding the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage. This ensures that parents are aware of their children's learning and have the opportunity to contribute their ideas, which may be included in the activities provided.

Access to their children's records of achievement demonstrates the progress children are making in relation to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Parents are observed to be relaxed and comfortable in addressing their child's day with staff. They share their positive views on how well their children are developing at the setting and comment on the 'home from home feeling the setting provides for their children'.

There are effective arrangements in place for all children, especially those with learning difficulties. These include the involvement of outside professionals to ensure that they are highly valued, included and treated equally and fairly. The arrangements also include disabled access to the building and toileting facilities.

Children benefit from an interesting range of activities and resources which help them value diversity. They engage in a variety of celebrations, such as Chinese New Year, Christmas and Easter. A varied selection of multicultural toys and books enables children to talk about people who may be 'different to themselves'.

Staff caring for children manage a wide range of children's behaviours in a way that promotes their welfare and development. There is a written statement on behaviour management. The methods used are discussed with parents and include explanation, offering distraction with another activity, praise and the guidance of sensitive staff who present themselves as positive role models. As a result of this, children demonstrate very positive caring attitudes to others. Children complete pictures and cards to send to a member of staff who has suffered a bereavement in her family. They are hoping these will remind her that the children are thinking of her. Staff throughout the setting are enthusiastic, caring, calm and consistent in their approach. This helps promote the children's self-esteem. They all relish the praise given by the staff team for their achievements, which are recognised with verbal praise. Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the setting promotes positive outcomes for children. Adults providing day care follow the same thorough vetting procedure as staff at the college, during the recruitment stage of employment. These procedures determine those caring for children at this time are suitable to do so and that procedures are in place to assess the continuing suitability of this staff team.

The operational plan demonstrates how staff are to be deployed effectively within the premises to support the safety, welfare and development of children most of the time and the registration system confirms that staff to child ratios are being adequately maintained. The management team has been adept at managing ratios under very difficult circumstances recently as a result of changes in the staff team beyond their control. They have been proactive in ensuring this situation will not continue and are recruiting two further staff members. Self evaluation by the management team has recognised that additional staff will also give the existing staff team time to reflect on practice. This will enable them to be more effective in the implementation of the planned activities in the future, which will further assist children in making good progress in all aspects of their learning.

Most records, policies and procedures which are required for the safe management of the provision and promote the welfare, care and learning of the children are sufficiently maintained. These include: risk assessments, with the exception of those for the dropping off of school aged children; children's detail sheets; attendance register; permission sheets; and accident and medication records. These are stored with confidentiality in mind and are retained for the required periods of time.

The leadership and management of the nursery education are good, as throughout the nursery. The provision is run by the governing body of Preston College. It employs a childcare manager, officer in charge, full time administration support worker making up a staff team of twenty five; all have recognised qualifications in Childcare or Education, some to degree level. The childcare manager is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operation of the setting with duties delegated to the officer in charge and three senior members of the staff team who take responsibility for the 'Birth to three matters' framework and Foundation Stage curriculum. Assessments of children's development are available but not complete in relation to children's starting points, and are therefore not comprehensive when informing parents and new staff of children's current and future learning needs. All activities are planned and evaluated in line with procedures and with the support of the Early Years Teaching Service. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection issues were raised around food and drink. Children are provided with a wide range of nutritious meals and have access to drinks throughout the day. This contributes to the health and well-being of the children at the setting.

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):

- review the risk assessments for the safety of children on outings

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):

- further develop the assessment procedure to clearly identify children's starting points in relation to the early learning goals

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