

Higher Croft CP School and Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY268694
Inspection date	28 November 2007
Inspector	Judith, Mary Horsfall
Setting Address	Fishmoor Drive, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 3UY
Telephone number	01254 267920
E-mail	
Registered person	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Crèche

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?

Higher Croft Children's Centre opened in 2004 and was previously a local authority family centre from 1988. It is situated in the Higher Croft area of Blackburn, and serves the local area and beyond. The centre comprises a day nursery, a crèche to support parents and carers attending the centre and a variety of courses and drop-in support groups, for parents, carers and their families. The centre is open each weekday for 49 weeks of the year from 08.00 to 18.00.

The children's centre provides integrated services which include health, education, family support and social care for children aged between birth and five years. The centre is registered to provide care for 65 children under the age of five years. There are currently 96 children from four months to five years on roll, of these 56 receive funding for early education. The crèche offers a maximum of 22 places and operates as required to support various adult groups that meet in the centre. All services are housed in a re-furnished building with outdoor play areas for the children. The setting welcomes children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

A management board including parental representatives oversee the operations of the centre, including the management of elements of the budget. There is an overall centre manager who is supported by a management team which includes the Educare team leader, a fully qualified teacher, family support workers, service advisors and an outreach worker. Blackburn with Darwen Early Years Department provide the service and employ a head of centre who also manages Audley and Queen's Park children's centre. The manager and her deputy who both hold relevant qualifications. Eleven members of staff hold NVQ level 3 or equivalent, two members of staff have NVQ 2 and there is one modern apprentice. In addition, agency staff can be called on to work when the crèche is operating or to cover staff absences.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are developing a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles because the staff incorporate activities such as songs and topic work during the day around issues of hygiene. Children are learning to use the toilets independently and are beginning to wash their hands with some support from staff. Children are also developing an awareness of how to care for their health needs, for example, the dental hygienist visits and children, if necessary children are referred to the dentist in consultation with parents. Children's health needs are met well because many members of staff hold current first aid certificates and there are well stocked first aid kits. All required written permissions are in place and documentation in respect of children's health is kept up to date. Children are able to rest and sleep according to their individual needs.

Children thoroughly enjoy their opportunities to be active indoors and outdoors and are developing good physical skills. They actively participate in daily outdoor play, enjoy music and dance sessions, learning to co-ordinate their bodies and move safely, avoiding obstacles. For example, they love to push toy prams over the ramped bridge in the play area and manipulate child sized garden tools with confidence. Children health needs are well promoted through clear policies and procedures and strong links to other health professionals in the centre.

Children are developing an awareness of healthy foods and drinks through planned activities and in daily routines. For example, the setting has been awarded 'Smiling for Life' accreditation as children are learning about healthy snacks and dental care. Recipes for healthy foods are available for parents in the reception area to continue the healthy options at home. Mealtimes are a positive experience for children as they sit around tables with attractive tablecloths and use child sized cutlery and crockery. The wide range of healthy snacks and meals ensures that children are very well nourished in the setting. Children are provided with regular drinks of water or milk throughout the day to ensure they are not thirsty.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in attractive, welcoming and safe indoor and outdoor environments. They are warmly greeted by name on arrival and hang their coats on their own named peg which also has their photograph. Children have a good range of areas for play and rest within the nursery. Good examples of the children's own work is attractively displayed throughout the building, further enhancing their sense of belonging. Children play in safe, well resourced rooms with areas defined for different types of play including a designated messy play room which is very

popular with the children. The outdoor area engages the children well and they happily play, rest and learn in a child friendly space. There is a large number of developmentally appropriate resources which are readily available for the children to make choices, with the sensory trolley including fibre optic lights, music and other lighting and sound effects being a current favourite. Regular cleaning and safety checks ensures toys and equipment are kept safe and minimises the risk of cross infection.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe because staff are skilled in the way they talk to them about safe procedures and reinforce safe practices as they ask children to pick up toys, be careful with equipment and not to run indoors. The setting has very comprehensive safety policies, fire procedures and risk assessments in place. These effectively minimise the risks to children and helps to keep them safe as they play freely both indoors and outdoors. However, the metallic heating vents do get hot and present as a hazard to children.

Children are kept safe because staff are clear about their role in child protection and understand their responsibility to contact the named person. The named person is fully aware of their role and the procedure which is to be followed should a situation occur which requires referral to the appropriate agency.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children look forward to coming to the nursery. They enter happily and eagerly greet staff and their friends. The settling in process is assisted by the staff who gather large amounts of information about children's home routines, favourite toys, comforters and important words. Children are learning to select resources for themselves from a wide, accessible choice. Children enjoy creative play, for example, they love to complete paintings and make patterns in the shaving foam. They use their imagination as they actively indulge in role play and attentively listen to stories. Children enjoy music and movement. They are learning some songs and rhymes from memory and take great pleasure in these aspects of the day. Staff use creative methods to engage the children such as using special dolls to explain about road safety and visits to the hospital. This area of learning is further enhanced by visits from the road safety officer and arts activities.

Children's curiosity and eagerness to play and learn are focused by staff who interact and encourage the children at all times. Children make good progress as staff have a secure knowledge of 'Birth to three matters' guidance and ensure that babies and younger children are offered a varied curriculum. Children enjoy an imaginative and varied range of activities that helps them to make progress in all areas of development. Their individual learning needs are assessed regularly and very well recorded by their key workers.

The very young children benefit from the planning using the 'Birth to three matters' guidance which clearly identifies the next steps in their learning. This process ensures that all children transfer very easily from one area to the next within the setting. Staff are clear about what children can do and therefore plan for the next steps within the planned activities. All children have their care needs well met through the daily routines and the time given by staff to each child to support and encourage their well-being.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making purposeful steps towards the early learning goals because the staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Skilful planning and highly effective observation records ensures children remain motivated and interested during their time in the setting. Staff are aware of the importance of child initiated activities and are flexible, allowing the children to explore topics which are close to them such as being a bridesmaid or having a new car at home. Children benefit from plentiful opportunities to learn about other people in society and join in activities to celebrate Hanukah, Valentine's Day, Diwali, Easter and other festivals.

Children are developing a good interest in books as they freely choose from a wide selection of suitable books in the reading area. They are beginning to understand the importance of writing for a purpose as they complete a painting and make a mark which they say is 'my name'. Children really enjoy storytime and enthusiastically participate, making sound effects and actively listening. However, opportunities are restricted for mark making and there is a restricted awareness of the printed word across the nursery which limits the children's learning.

Children are curious and are developing an interest in the world about them. They confidently use the computers and display a positive approach to new experiences such as trying new foods. They are building strong friendships and enter the nursery with confidence. Children benefit from purposeful and developmentally appropriate play opportunities outdoors. Daily exercise is available and children are learning to balance, manoeuvre around objects and use a variety of large wheeled toys. They are also manipulating small tools and implements such as scissors, paint brushes and small construction toys. Children are developing a clear understanding of mathematical concepts and are beginning to use language such as bigger, small, full and empty. Staff use day to day activities to promote an understanding of basic mathematics. For example at song time they sing songs with number rhymes and outdoors children are recognising numerals as they play games such as hopscotch.

When the children are due to leave for primary school, they all enjoy a cap and gown graduation ceremony where they are handed a scroll and their detailed learning journal. This develops the children's feeling of worth and raises their self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are enthusiastically welcomed by staff into the setting. They are valued and respected because staff ensure each child has the opportunity to engage in all aspects of the curriculum. Children's views are sought, and when appropriate, acted upon. For example, during one session the children requested that the sensory trolley be brought from another part of the building and a member of staff promptly obliged, creating a fun, play experience for the children. The inclusion of all children including some with learning disabilities from a nearby school is actively planned and monitored. When identified, additional support is available for children, and staff work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure all children's individual needs are met.

Children learn about their community and other cultures as they engage in activities, which promote their understanding of the wider world. For example, they celebrate Chinese New Year, and at Eid have their hands painted with henna. This work is supported by a strong equal opportunities policy and staff who have developed an action plan to promote diversity.

Children are learning to take responsibility for their behaviour because the staff follow positive and effective strategies for helping children learn to manage their behaviour. For example, children engage well with Wally, a puppet who encourages good manners, showing how to put on an apron and sit well at the table. Children learn the boundaries and guidelines because staff are consistent and are good role models, having high regard for each other and the children. Staff work well to reinforce positive behaviour and use suitable techniques such as time out and distraction for cases of inappropriate behaviour. Children are very proud of their reward stamps which are achieved for behaviour such as singing along, being kind, tidying up and behaving well. Staff also work with parents to ensure consistency at home and are able to advise on extra support if necessary in the form of parenting classes which run in the centre.

Partnership with parents is good. The effective partnership contributes significantly to children's well-being. Parents are provided with good quality information which informs them about the care and education provided. For example, a white board with daily activities is on display in the reception area and sticky notes are available for parents to add their views or questions. Staff spend time talking to parents about the care provided and are always available for discussion and support. Parents are welcome to stay with their child during sessions to help settle the child if necessary. Parents evenings are held each term to ensure parents are well informed of their children's educational progress in the Foundation Stage curriculum. Highly detailed records are prepared to assist the smooth transition of children into primary education and the setting works closely with local schools. Parents' views are actively sought and their family circumstances are respected. Parents learn about their child's development through discussion, use of excellent learning journals for each child, comprehensive newsletters and strong links with their key worker. There is a complaints procedure in place but parents are not fully aware of the of the process for making a complaint.

Children are learning to take care of each other and all living things. For example, they look after their friends, helping each other when they stumble and making a path through the leaves for their peers who are pushing toy prams. During work on the jungle theme, plants were brought in to the centre and outdoors daffodil bulbs have been planted for the spring. Children learn how to care for plants and to watch them grow and develop.

These activities foster their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children enjoy their time in the nursery, where they play and learn in safety. The organisation of the environment allows children freedom of movement with opportunities to enjoy a good range of play opportunities supported by a dedicated staff group. Children's needs are adequately met because all legally required documentation is in place although it is not very well organised.

The setting has a robust system in place for the vetting and clearance of all staff, to ensure children are cared for by adults who are suitable to do so. The staff to child ratios are met most effectively to ensure children are supported and cared for in line with the requirements of registration.

The leadership and management is good, with staff being led by a committed management team. They work very well together and support each other in their roles. Leaders are good role models and encourage staff to develop and evaluate their practice and therefore, the care

of the children. Staff are encouraged to become involved in the organisation of the setting, for example, selecting the topics for training and being offered challenges to stimulate the children's learning.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, two recommendations were made. The first one was to ensure staff names and hours of attendance are included in the daily register. The second was to ensure the times of fire drills are recorded. Both of these issues have been fully addressed, improving the safety of the children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted received information relating to National Standard 13 (Child protection). A childcare inspector visited the provision on 3 July 2006. An action was raised and satisfactorily met by the registered provider. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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):

- ensure parents are fully aware of complaints procedure
- review the contents and organisation of policies and procedures
- ensure heating vents do not present a hazard to children.

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 further opportunities for mark making and print awareness.

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