

Whittington Under Fives

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 224222 |
| Inspection date | 27 November 2007 |
| Inspector | Dianne Andrews |
| Setting Address | Station Road, Whittington, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY11 4DA |
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| Registered person | Whittington Under Fives |
| 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 satisfactory. 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?

Whittington Under Fives Pre-School opened in 1991. It operates from two rooms in a local community centre, in the village of Whittington on the outskirts of the town of Oswestry. The setting serves the local area.

There are currently 51 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 36 children in receipt of funded nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children who have disabilities and/or learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 15:00.

Nine part-time staff work with the children. All staff have early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are helped to develop good health habits through a range of proactive activities and routines and as a consequence the pre-school has been awarded the HEY (Health in Early Years) Award. Children enthusiastically eat their snacks of fruit and naan bread and benefit from the wide variety of nutritious and interesting snacks provided throughout the week. This helps them to learn to make healthy choices about their food. Children have access to drinking water at the 'watering hole' throughout the session to enable them to meet their own needs if they become thirsty. Children enjoy staying to the lunch club, where they eat their packed lunches, which are provided by parents, while sitting and socialising together along with staff members.

Children learn to follow suitable health and hygiene practices through well-established routines. For example, they know to wash their hands before snack time and staff consistently reinforce the need to wash away any germs. However, prior to snack time they use a communal bowl of water and a shared towel for this purpose, which is not wholly effective in protecting them from cross-infection. Staff wear protective clothing when preparing snacks and when changing children and there are written guidelines displayed to ensure good routines are followed, although the changing mat is split. The clear procedures for sick and infectious children help prevent the spread of infection and parents are contacted if their child becomes ill at the setting. Consequently, this helps children remain healthy.

Children enjoy opportunities for exercise and playing outside in the fresh air, helping them to develop their physical skills and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They have lots of fun as they practise their ball skills in the large expanse of outdoor play space. They take part in familiar action songs and particularly enjoy a large group activity where they flap the 'pond' to create small ripples and large waves. They enthusiastically climb the scramble net and ably use the slide in the indoor environment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are able to choose from a suitable range of activities that are provided by the staff. There is a good range of resources available, some of which are easily accessible in storage units, and staff set out interest corners, such as the role play, mathematics, creative and computer area. This allows children to make choices about their play. Staff work particularly hard to make the indoor environment welcoming and child-friendly. They prepare the activities before the children arrive, decorating the walls with displays and notice boards. This means that children and parents are comfortable in the setting, which is bright and colourful.

There are generally good processes in place to promote safety within the setting. Staff set clear safety boundaries and as a result, children learn that they should walk when indoors and they must not climb onto the tables. This encourages children to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. The fire evacuation is displayed in the main room and fire drills are completed regularly. Security is good as the main door to the building is locked and staff closely monitor access at all times, supervising entrance and egress. Risk assessments are completed regularly and suitable precautions are taken, such as storing cleaning materials safely and checking the toilets and safety of toys on a daily basis; however the store room is not secured to ensure children independently using the adjacent toilet facilities do not gain access and the wooden

floor is splintering in many places which puts children at risk from accidental injury, especially as many children use the floor for their active play.

Children are well protected by staff who have a good understanding of child protection issues. They have a clear understanding of signs and symptoms that may alert them to child abuse and fully understand the correct procedures for reporting any concerns. The written policy is detailed and offers clear guidance to make sure all staff fully understand the procedures. This helps to ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally settle well or are supported to do so by the caring and sensitive staff who show kindness and concern while helping them separate from their parents and carers. Most children show confidence as they move freely and independently around the large room choosing from the range of activities set out by staff. Children benefit from good relationships; they play together, as appropriate for their age and stage of development, and enjoy each other's company.

Children enjoy whole group activities such as 'Listening with Lucy' sessions where they enthusiastically use instruments while joining in with favourite songs. Staff are aware of the different needs of children aged under three and are familiar with 'Birth to three matters', but do not feel confident with the framework and have not yet effectively implemented it into their practice to support the youngest children in the group.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have an appropriate understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn and use this knowledge to provide a suitable range of activities and play opportunities. Planning is balanced across the six areas of learning and identifies basic learning intentions based on the stepping stones. However, there is no clear adaptation of routine activities to ensure older or more able children are provided with sufficient challenge to help them make good progress. This means that the full range of children's abilities is not always recognised and more able children may not realise their potential.

Staff interact well with children during their play, listening and responding to their interests and acknowledging their choices. They use an appropriate range of teaching methods and make observations of children's play and learning which are entered in children's records of progress, however these records are not consistently completed to ensure that the information gained from them can be effectively used to identify children's next step in their learning, to inform future planning and to ensure activities build upon what children already know. Staff manage children and their behaviour well and they are effectively deployed throughout the session to support children's learning.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school and are generally confident to play independently or in small groups. They have a positive approach to new experiences and share their enthusiasm with their friends, for instance as they explore the cornflower silk. They respond well to realistic adult expectations of acceptable behaviour and understand the need for simple rules. They show high levels of self-esteem and independence, confidently helping themselves to the accessible resources; preparing the paint easel and putting on aprons. They show a good

awareness of their own needs and independently pour themselves a drink or access tissues to wipe their faces.

Children listen and respond with interest to stories and begin to recognise initial sounds as they practise 'Jolly Phonics'. They have opportunities to make marks on white boards and painting easels and to write for a purpose while making lists in the role play area. However, staff miss opportunities to develop children's skills in language and literacy further, as routine activities are not tailored to challenge or support children at varying developmental stages. Children enjoy using the computer on a regular basis and develop their knowledge of everyday technology using role play toys such as telephones, tills and interactive toys. They have opportunities to explore and investigate materials and enjoy demonstrating their skills using various construction kits. Children develop a sense of place and gain an appreciation of their local community through themes such as 'Where I live'. All children have good opportunities to take part in a range of physical activities and learn about keeping healthy.

Children sort objects by colour and size during planned activities and they enjoy joining in with number rhymes such as 'Five fat sausages'. They have some basic opportunities to count during large group time and at snack time. However, planned and routine activities are not always adapted to provide further mathematical challenge for more able children. Children play imaginatively in all areas of the pre-school. They create scenarios from their home life within the role play area and thoroughly enjoy driving vehicles through the sand tray, making vehicle noises and developing characters for their projects.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed into the group and are valued by staff who respect their individual personalities, which helps them develop a sense of belonging. All children have equal access to toys and equipment which meet their individual needs, so they can become confident and independent. The group has appropriate procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and staff work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure children's individual needs are met, for instance a home-link diary for a child being supported by the group helps the staff member to fully promote his development.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are polite and caring and are learning to understand right from wrong. Staff are good role models. Their calm and consistent manner and use of appropriate strategies help children understand the expected rules of behaviour. Children participate in festivals that reflect the heritage of children in the group such as Christmas and Easter. Staff also plan interesting activities to offer children opportunities to appreciate and value each other's similarities and differences, for instance they look at the festivals of other cultures such as Chinese New Year and Hanukkah.

Children benefit from the positive relationships fostered with their parents and carers. Parents praise the friendly and approachable staff and value the pre-school as an established part of the local community. They have some opportunities to share information verbally with staff to help ensure children's changing needs are met, although all staff work within the group on a part-time basis, which means that there are some potential problems with continuity. Information is displayed on the notice boards and there are additional leaflets from other organisations available in the entrance that parents may find useful. In addition parents form the committee and are involved in making decisions for the pre-school. There is a satisfactory procedure in place for recording complaints, which is shared with parents.

The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is satisfactory.

The parent handbook has information about how children learn through the Foundation Stage. Most parents are aware that the group keep records of their children's progress, which are shared with them at annual parents' evenings and can be passed onto the school when the child leaves the setting. However, there is currently no system in place to encourage parents to contribute to their children's records of progress or to share what they know about their child's starting points in order to effectively assess their achievements.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, welfare and development. Staff and parents work together to ensure that all necessary consents are in place and that information about children's care is relevant and up to date. An accurate registration system is in place and the required records are accurately maintained and stored confidentially to support the welfare of the children attending. The staff team work hard to promote a warm and caring family atmosphere. Good ratios are maintained so that children have one-to-one and small group activities where necessary. However, children are not wholly supported through the key worker system as all staff work on a part-time basis within the setting and although each key worker has a 'buddy' within the staff group, there are no clear lines of communication to ensure consistency of care.

Leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. The registered person uses effective recruitment procedures, which ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and qualified. Staff complete annual appraisals to ensure they are all working to effectively meet the children's needs. They are approachable, friendly and caring. Staff training is given priority and has helped to develop staff's knowledge of the early learning goals. The systems to enable the group to monitor the effectiveness of the education provided are being developed and the leaders are keen to work with advisors to continue to make improvements. The group are working with the adjacent primary school to aid children's transition into their formal education setting.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were asked to ensure that all sockets are inaccessible to children. Sockets are now made safe with plug blanks to ensure children's safety.

They were also asked to improve documentation; to ensure that parents sign the medication book after medication has been administered and to have a procedure in place should a child become ill. These have been done to promote the well-being of children attending.

At the last education inspection the group were asked to provide practical opportunities for children to begin to understand the mathematical concepts of addition and subtraction. Activities are planned to offer children opportunities to develop their problem solving techniques, but there are missed opportunities within spontaneous and routine activities of the day to promote this further, particularly for more able children.

They were also asked to provide writing materials in the role play area. Children make use of notepads and writing materials in the home corner and within the shop, encouraging children to write for a purpose.

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.

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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 all health and hygiene routines are effective in preventing the spread of infection
- take steps to minimise hazards; make the flooring safe and the storeroom inaccessible to children
- develop staff's understanding of how to plan and provide a sufficient range of experiences for the under-threes, for example by using the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- ensure that the key worker system is effective in promoting consistency for children and parents.

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):

- ensure that arrangements are effective for observing and assessing children's progress and ensure that they link directly with planning to provide challenging activities and experiences to continue their learning effectively
- increase the level of challenge during routine activities for more able children and consider the learning potential within the everyday routine
- involve parents in the ongoing assessment process for their children.

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