

Explore Learning

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY231795
Inspection date	02 August 2007
Inspector	Barbara Ann Bush
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Registered person	Explore Learning Ltd
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Out of School 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Explore Learning (Chelmsford) opened in 2001. It is one of 14 centres run by Explore Learning Ltd. It operates from a concession inside the Sainsbury's superstore in Springfield, Chelmsford. The facility serves the local and wider community.

There are currently 305 children aged from five years to under fourteen years on roll. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and could support children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens seven days a week all year round. Sessions are from 15:00 to 20:00 term times and various times during holiday periods. Additionally the group opens from 10:00 on Saturdays and Sundays.

The group employs 13 members of staff, three of whom are managers. At present there are no staff members with recognised early years qualifications. However, all are qualified to work with children on the computer based curriculum interactive educational tool. There are three members of staff working towards a recognised early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The group takes positive steps to adequately protect children's health and welfare. For example, individual children's medical needs are recorded by staff, soap and paper towels are provided in the toilets for children to use and staff remind children to use tissues when coughing or sneezing. Appropriate measures are taken to care for children if they become unwell while attending the setting. For example, emergency contact numbers are recorded so that parents and carers can be alerted.

In the event of an accident, action is appropriate as sufficient staff members hold first aid qualifications. The setting has a well stocked first aid box that is easily accessed. Appropriate documentation is in place to record accidents, the administration of medicines and medical products. All records are confidential and individual to each child's file.

Children are learning about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through the introduction of topics, such as discussion on the forthcoming Olympics. Food is not served at the setting but chilled water is freely available. There is no outside play however, children practise hand and eye coordination skills as they are encouraged to develop keyboard techniques and mouse control. They can also play with darts, draw with crayons and use games such as 'Jenga', which helps their hand control. Consequently, children's awareness of health and exercise is satisfactorily promoted.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure, safe environment where the organisation of space ensures their ability to move from the computers to the 'Surf Club'. The premises are brightly decorated; lighting and ventilation is good. Toys, equipment and furniture are safe, clean and in good condition and the computers are regularly checked to ensure their ongoing suitability. Staff conduct written risk assessments to minimise hazards.

Security within the setting is very good. Children sign themselves in and out of the setting, observed by a parent or a member of staff. Their attendance is also recorded on the staff computer. The gate into the facility is only operated by a member of staff and is secure at all times. Children can only leave with a known adult at the end of each session. Staff and children are aware of the fire drill and any emergency evacuation drills are recorded and exits are clearly identified. Children do not leave the premises for outings or outside play.

Staff have a good understanding of child protection issues, their roles and responsibilities with regard to protecting children in their care. They have acquired the latest information and reference booklet. They understand local referral procedures and are aware that the children's care is paramount and they must take appropriate steps to ensure their safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are eager and happy to attend the setting. Good relationships have formed between the staff, children and their peers. Individual time and attention is given to each child. They

can confidently ask for help and are relaxed about the tasks they are set. Staff engage in discussion with them about things they may have done at home and their forthcoming holidays. Children have the opportunity to talk about hobbies and news when they have finished their programmes. Staff encourage the children to share their views with them and each other. The computer programmes are at an appropriate level for each child. Time is spent on the initial introduction of parents and children and this ensures that staff have assessed the children's abilities. This process results in the correct assigning of programmes to meet the children's needs. The level of difficulty is increased as the children complete tasks in mathematics, reading, writing and spelling.

Children are cared for as individuals with different needs. They are well supported in trying out new activities. Clear explanations from staff help develop the children's confidence in themselves and their abilities. They receive a lot of praise and encouragement from the staff and there is a good rapport between staff and children. Children complete challenges on the computers and for each challenge they move their names around a board. This is designed to ensure that all children are recognised for their achievements.

When children have finished the programmes on the computer, they are free to play in the 'surf club'. A variety of resources are available, for example, board games, art and craft resources and topic work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy in place and staff have undertaken training on their respective courses. Children are treated with concern and girls and boys have equal access to all the equipment. Discriminatory remarks are challenged by the staff members. Staff ensure that children access resources that reflect diversity in the community such as books, computer programmes that cover different cultures and a quiz on world religions.

Staff members are aware of any additional requirement that a child may have and take positive and considered steps to enable children to fully participate in activities. Additional resources are in place such as, a larger mouse, magnifiers, colour screens and overlays which assist children with dyslexia.

Children behave very well and respond positively to requests made by staff. The clear code of conduct, which is shared with parents, supports the good policies that are designed to help children manage their own behaviour. Children work well with each other, cooperating and sharing, supported by staff members who themselves are good role models.

The staff members form good working relationships with parents. They work in partnership with parents and carers to meet the needs of children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared and parents feel fully informed and involved. During the inspection, a parent gave enthusiastic praise about the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The manager is a teacher and is currently training for an early years qualification. She has worked for two years for the organisation and became the manager earlier this year. She is enthusiastic about her work and is aware of her responsibilities regarding the National Standards.

Staff members working with children have relevant experience but do not hold appropriate childcare qualifications in line with Ofsted's expectations. However, Explore Learning is aware of qualification requirements and the company has an action plan in place to achieve this. Staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities but do not complete an induction programme that covers health and safety or child protection within the first week of employment. They are effectively deployed during the sessions which results in children receiving appropriate support during their time at the centre.

Documentation is in order and available for inspection. All of the centres have the same operational plans that are devised by their head office. Staff and parents can access the policies and procedures, ensuring that everyone understands the aims of the group.

Overall, the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the setting was required to ensure that all entries in the accident book were confidential. The staff now complete individual sheets for each child. This ensures that records are comprehensive and information is only shared with parents and the staff.

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

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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):

- continue to pursue training to ensure that at least half of the staff hold a Level 2 early years qualification (Level 3 for the manager) appropriate for the care of children
- arrange induction training which includes health and safety and child protection policies and procedures in the first week of a staff member's employment.

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