

Pathways Childcare

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218468
Inspection date	05 December 2007
Inspector	Jennie Lenton
Setting Address	Pathways Childcare Centre, Lid Lane, Cheadle, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST10 1QA
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Registered person	Pathways Childcare Centre Trustees
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Pathways Childcare Centre opened in 1996. It operates from three separate buildings within Bishop Rawle C.E.(A) Primary School, situated in the village of Cheadle, Staffordshire. A maximum of 44 children may attend the centre at any one time. The centre opens Monday to Friday from 07:00 until 17:30 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 47 children from two to eight years on roll. Of these 20 children receive funding for nursery education. The setting provides support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for children who speak English as an additional language.

The centre employs six staff, five of whom are qualified to NVQ Level 3 or equivalent. The sixth member of staff is currently working towards a recognised qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are effectively protected from cross-infection as the setting has robust policies and procedures in place. Staff wear disposable gloves for nappy changing and all surfaces are cleaned after use which reduces the risk of contamination. Sick children are excluded from the setting which prevents the spread of infection. Any child who becomes ill at the setting is able to rest quietly until they are collected. This helps to maintain the health of all. Children's health is further promoted as they follow sensible personal hygiene routines. Children know that they need to wash their hands properly after visiting the toilet or playing outside. They understand why this is important as staff talk to them about 'keeping healthy'. As a result, they often wash their hands without prompting.

Accident records are well maintained. A high proportion of staff are qualified to administer first aid and all staff fully understand the importance of accurately recording and sharing information with parents. This promotes consistency of care. Medication records are also appropriately completed. However, parental consent for emergency medical advice or treatment is not consistently recorded. Where omissions occur, welfare is compromised.

Children benefit from a healthy and nutritional diet. They enjoy toast and crumpets at snack time and tuck in enthusiastically to fruit. At lunchtime, children have the choice of a hot or cold meal. Hot meals are provided by the school caterers while cold options are provided by the setting. Children choose from cooked dishes such as spaghetti bolognese or pizza and salad. Others select from a range of sandwiches or pasta salad and fresh fruit. Those who attend the after school provision are also offered a light snack. Meal times are relaxed and an opportunity to socialise. Children confidently pour their own drinks as they talk to the staff and each other about their morning activities. This helps children develop a positive approach to healthy eating. There is constant access to fresh water. This ensures that children remain hydrated as they are able to meet their individual needs.

Children enjoy good opportunities for active play. They regularly access the spacious outside playground where they have plenty of space to run and jump. They enjoy playing with the large parachute and join in active songs and games. They develop good hand and eye co-ordination as they bounce and catch balls. During bad weather staff make good use of space and resources to engage them in active play indoors. Children enjoy using soft blocks to climb and play on or dance imaginatively to music. As a result, children's physical development is good and the variety of activities ensures that they have a positive attitude towards exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and welcoming environment where risks to them are limited through good safety and security procedures. The exterior doors are all securely locked enabling staff to monitor access at all times. This protects children from inappropriate visitors and from leaving unsupervised. Risk assessments are completed regularly and daily safety checks are also made. All areas are well maintained. A high level of supervision also further safeguards children. Staff work alongside them at all times. This lessens the likelihood of harm through accidental injury.

Children use a wide range of safe, good quality resources. They are able to independently choose most activities as resources are stored within easy reach. They play safely as they follow instruction well. They know not to run as they 'might fall' and line up sensibly before going out. A sense of responsibility is further promoted as they take part in the setting's evacuation procedure. This helps them to respond to instruction quickly and calmly. Children attending the before and after school provision also benefit from robust procedures. They are given reflective tabards to wear as they walk to and from different settings with staff. This ensures that they are visible to motorists and easily identifiable to staff members. As a result, their welfare is effectively promoted.

The good knowledge of child protection procedures demonstrated by staff helps to ensure children are protected from harm and neglect. All staff understand the correct procedures to follow for recording concerns. They have a clear understanding of signs and symptoms that may alert to child abuse. Up to date details of the Local Safeguarding Children Board have been obtained. This ensures that any concerns can be promptly reported to the relevant authorities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are confident and happy at the setting. They have warm relationships with each other and with the staff. Children are treated with respect and their contributions to the setting are valued. Their work is displayed around the room and they are encouraged to value their achievements as they receive certificates for reaching individual goals. There are plenty of opportunities for children to snuggle up with staff as they read stories or play alongside the children. As a result, children are relaxed and comfortable, developing a positive sense of belonging.

Children enjoy a good range of stimulating experiences that encourage their intellectual and creative development. For example, they get involved in making boats with plastic trays, exploring the feel of cooked spaghetti and creating their own designs as they paint with their hands and feet. Staff observe children as they play and track their development. Their superb understanding of how children develop and their excellent use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework means that outcomes for this age range are fully promoted. Children's preferences are also respected as they move freely around the setting to access resources. For example, they enjoy dressing up as clowns and princesses or playing 'houses' as they construct a den out of the soft play blocks. Children are immersed in their play as they act out cooking in the home area, making cups of tea and washing up. Quieter activities such as reading, crafts and jigsaws are also enjoyed. Staff encourage all children to be actively engaged and language skills are effectively developed as staff talk to them about their activities. As a result children's social skills are developing well.

Children learn right from wrong as positive actions are rewarded. They are encouraged to behave well through the skilful use of praise and encouragement. Children enjoy being chosen as 'the special helper' for the day and beam with pride as they are asked to help the staff at snack time. Staff reinforce all their positive efforts by saying 'well done' or 'that's very good' as children respond to instruction to sit nicely or share. Consequently, children have good levels of self-esteem.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff demonstrate a suitable understanding of the Foundation Stage. They have undertaken training and have a fair knowledge of how children progress through the stepping stones. They work well as a team to deliver the planned activities. Adequate planning ensures that all areas of learning are generally well covered. In particular personal, social and emotional development is effectively promoted through a range of activities which encourage children to gain confidence in their abilities. Opportunities for basic calculating skills and letter recognition to be developed are less extensive. As a consequence, staff do not fully engage children in these areas.

The system for assessing children's achievements is largely sufficient and children make suitable progress. All staff make quality observations which are then recorded in the children's individual files. These are regularly updated which means that any gaps in learning are promptly identified. Staff also seek to evaluate each activity and identify children's next steps from this process. However, the evaluations do not always link to the learning intention of the activity. Therefore, the identified next steps are sometimes irrelevant to the area of learning that is being assessed which impacts on future planning around this development area. As a result, staff miss opportunities to extend children's learning in line with the stated outcome. This hinders children's progress.

Staff generally use suitable methods to maintain children's interest, sitting with them, asking questions and extending their play in most areas. For instance, as children play with toy animals in the sand, staff encourage them to explore their understanding of volume and size as they discuss how much sand is needed to cover different animals and what will happen when the animal is moved. Staff are also skilled at including more reserved children and those with additional needs. They adapt activities effectively to ensure that all children are equally well supported. Children are also clear about what is expected of them as staff explain activities well. For example, they know how many are allowed on the computer at one time and monitor this effectively without staff intervention. However, routine activities such as registration and circle times are sometimes too drawn out for children to maintain concentration. For example, children become fidgety and disinterested as staff go too slowly through the classroom rules that they are already familiar with. Similarly, as they have to wait for their turn to recognise their name and then wait again for the rest of the group, children become bored. Staff fail to make the process engaging and opportunities for learning are missed.

Children's attitude to learning is positive. They concentrate well as they design Christmas cards with glitter and baubles or spend time playing imaginatively in the home corner. Children generally behave well and respond positively to the boundaries set. Their self-help skills are developing as they serve themselves at lunch and put on their coats before outside play. They have a developing awareness of their own needs and increasingly learn how to meet them. Children's language skills are good. They speak clearly and are confident singing along to 'twinkle twinkle little star' and other favourite nursery songs. They interact well, taking turns in conversation as they enjoy using language creatively as they role play housework, using the toy washing machine and chatting on the telephone. Children do not have many opportunities to link sounds to letters. They are familiar with seeing their names and other words in print but staff miss opportunities to extend their understanding of how words sound and letter recognition. Opportunities for children to use pencils and crayons are available and children mark-make with increasing control.

Children understand and use numbers in everyday routines. They count up to twelve confidently and are able to match number to object and recognise different shapes. They use mathematical language such as 'more' or 'less' as they compare items and consider who is the tallest and

smallest. There are some activities which encourage them to consider basic calculation. For example, they fill Santa's sleigh and respond to questions about how many more presents are needed so all the children will receive one. However, opportunities to extend their problem solving skills in everyday routines and activities are missed. Children have plentiful opportunities to investigate objects and find out about their surroundings. They enjoy nature walks and explore the natural resources that they find. They look at the weather each day telling staff what sort of a day it is. Staff organise visits from people in the community so that children can learn about the wider community such as the role of the fire service. Additionally, they celebrate a range of festivals and get involved in tasting different types of food from around the world. This helps children learn about their own beliefs and those of other people. As a result, children's knowledge and understanding of the world is effectively extended.

Children develop their fine manipulative skills well. They use one-handed tools competently and show increasing control as they draw pictures and decorate cards. Children play outside regularly having lots of fun as they run, jump and spin around. Their creativity is valued as they use their imagination in play. Children also express themselves freely through art and music as they move imaginatively 'jumping like popcorn' and 'slithering like spaghetti'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are treated with equal concern as the setting works well with parents to ensure children's needs are met. Individual records are sufficiently detailed to maintain the welfare of all children. For example, detailing the support individual children require with toileting needs. The resources at the setting also positively reflect individuality. Children are encouraged to talk about their own home life as they take home 'Jessica the bear' and fill in a diary of where they have taken her. This helps children value their own background. There is also a fair range of resources and activities which reflect different cultures, disabilities and ethnicities. The setting provides some innovative opportunities for children to develop their understanding of the wider world, such as cooking Indian snacks and celebrating Eid and Diwali. Children are also encouraged to consider the needs of others as they take part in fundraising activities. This encourages children to develop a positive attitude towards the wider community and an appreciation for diversity.

Children have good opportunities to develop their social skills as they are encouraged to play together harmoniously. They generally behave well and show respect to each other and their surroundings. Staff are successful in managing behaviour in a way that promotes children's self-esteem. They encourage children to recognise the importance of rules by involving them in discussion about playing together safely and kindly. As a result, children are respectful and show consideration for other's feelings. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children receive consistency of care as staff are friendly and approachable, communicating regularly with parents. Parents have the opportunity to stop and chat on a daily basis at arrival and collection times. This ensures that any changes or concerns relating to the children can be quickly responded to. For example, written information is required if a child is to be collected by anyone other than the usual carer. This protects children from inappropriate individuals. A brief parents' pack is also provided detailing some of the activities on offer. There is limited information about the policies and procedures that the setting adheres to, however, and not all policies are easily accessible on request. As a result, parents are not able to make themselves fully informed about the care provided.

The setting actively welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children with a range of additional needs are offered a high level of support as staff are committed to assisting them in their development. Similarly, children for whom English is a second language are fully included in the setting. Additional training is sought to meet any specific needs. This ensures that staff are able to offer the right level of input. Staff work effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all children are encouraged to reach their full potential. As a result those with additional needs make good progress.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Parents receive basic information on the educational programme provided and are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning in a variety of ways. Parents are asked to contribute to staff's understanding of their child's abilities and are invited to come in for parents' evenings. They also receive some topic sheets which include ideas to extend their children's understanding at home. This enables parents to enhance their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff who work with the children are suitably qualified and experienced. Recruitment procedures are sound, ensuring that all staff are appropriately vetted. New staff receive a comprehensive induction which ensures that they are quickly familiar with the key policies and procedures. This promotes the welfare of children. Appraisals are undertaken periodically to enable staff to identify any training needs. Children benefit as new ideas and techniques are incorporated to enhance their experience. However, there are no formal procedures to assess the ongoing suitability of staff. Potentially, this compromises children's safety as staff are not routinely asked about changes in their circumstances.

The leadership and management of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Appropriate guidance is given by the management to ensure that staff are clear in their roles and feel supported as they develop. All staff are encouraged to be involved in planning and delivery of activities. Time is given for them to assess children and track their progress. As a result, children are achieving steadily. There is no system to assess different teaching styles and the impact this has on children's learning. As a result, the setting is not effectively evaluating its own strengths and weaknesses. This hinders future improvement. All staff are keen and enthusiastic, however, and are committed to promoting quality learning experiences.

All required documentation is of a suitable standard and is available for inspection. It is stored appropriately with due regard for confidentiality. Information is accurately recorded and any concerns promptly shared with parents. This helps to safeguard children. Ratios are consistently maintained to ensure children benefit from appropriate levels of adult supervision. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care, the setting was required to familiarise staff with current legislation and guidance regarding special educational needs and disability; further consolidate staff's understanding of the setting's policies and procedures and increase opportunities for children to self-select resources. There is now a clear statement regarding the setting's approach to learning difficulties and/or disabilities which is in line with current legislation. There is a specific member of staff who has undertaken training in this area. As a

result, children with additional needs are effectively supported as all staff understand their roles and responsibilities towards promoting inclusion. Staff have also been given copies of other key policies and procedures to ensure that these are consistently implemented. Resources have been reorganised so that they are now on low-level shelving and in child-friendly storage boxes. Therefore, children can self-select items during free play activities. This ensures that individual preferences are respected.

To improve the standards in nursery education, the setting was required to develop the short term plans to promote the learning of all children; make effective use of assessments and evaluation of activities to inform future planning and increase opportunities for children to develop their skills using information technology and to balance and climb. The short term plans now include learning intentions for each activity, and seek to promote all children's learning by identifying different levels of achievement according to individual children's abilities. Children's achievements are recorded and areas for future work are identified. This now needs to be refined to ensure that the evaluations are effectively linked to the learning intentions. The setting provides plenty of opportunity for children to develop their information technology skills. Children enjoy using the computer for educational games and show skill with both the keyboard and mouse. Their balancing skills are also now well promoted as they play outside, walking on small stilts or using the balancing beams.

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):

- obtain written permission to seek medical advice and emergency treatment for all children
- devise and implement a system to ensure staff's ongoing suitability with particular regard to any changes in circumstance
- review the information provided to parents regarding the policies and procedures that are in place and ensure that these policies are made easily accessible.

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 evaluation of activities to show what children have learned and clearly identify their next steps in relation to these achievements
- increase opportunities for children to develop basic problem solving and calculating skills
- provide more opportunities for children to hear initial sounds in words
- revise the delivery of routine activities to engage children more fully
- devise and implement a system to evaluate teaching styles and to identify strengths and weaknesses in practice.

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