

Darwen Children's Centre (Lord St Site)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY246291
Inspection date	01 February 2008
Inspector	Shirley Maynard
Setting Address	Lord Street, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 0HD
Telephone number	01254 778900
E-mail	
Registered person	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Sessional 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?

Darwen Children's Centre is based in a children's centre situated within the Sure Start building in the Sudell area of Darwen. It is registered to provide full day care, with an integral crèche, for up to 94 children between birth and five years of whom no more than 24 may be under two years. There are currently 74 children on roll, of whom 26 are in receipt of funding for their nursery education. The setting is currently supporting children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The nursery has sole use of a baby area, sensory room, large play area, activity area and playroom. It is open Monday to Friday 08.00 to 18.00 and closed on bank holidays. The nursery is close to all local amenities. The setting receives support from the local authority and is currently working towards High/Scope accreditation.

There are 14 staff and of these, 12 hold a level 3 childcare qualification or above. In addition, there is a manager and a deputy who are supernumerary to the childcare ratios. A qualified teacher works in the pre-school each morning during term time only.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children greatly benefit from being cared for in a warm, comfortable and child friendly environment. This is enhanced by staff participating in a rigorous induction programme to ensure they are familiar with the policies and procedures that underpin the running of the nursery. For example, all staff are fully aware of how to complete accident forms accurately, and all parents have given prior written consent for emergency medical treatment which means there will be no unnecessary delay if a child has a serious injury or accident. Furthermore, staff have attended first aid training and there are fully stocked first aid kits which are easily accessible. Staff are quick to intervene and deliver treatment and reassurance to children following accidents.

Children's health is clearly well considered and they are successfully protected from infection. This is because the premises are clean and hygienic and staff ensure children wash their hands before eating and after messy activities. Furthermore, children are reminded about the importance of placing a hand over their mouth when coughing or sneezing, and staff are vigilant and ensure children's noses are wiped when needed. In addition, children are protected from the risk of cross-infection through the effective sickness policy which is shared with parents.

A very healthy range of snacks and meals are offered to the children, including a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. These are cooked freshly on the premises and meet special dietary needs. For example, children thoroughly enjoy vegetable lasagne at lunch time and homemade soup for their tea. Even the very youngest children enjoy their food and are fully supported to become independent feeders. Children have access to fresh drinking water which they pour themselves and so develop their hand-eye coordination, they butter their bread and spoon their yoghurt into their dish at tea time.

The children are provided with ample opportunity to play outside every day. They are able to develop their physical skills which contributes to their well-being and development. They climb, run, hop and skip and skilfully change direction to avoid other children as they play. Children also enjoy using small tools to assist in the development of their hand-eye coordination, for example, glue stick and paintbrushes and even the youngest children are confident and competent in using the scissors appropriately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children greatly benefit from being cared for in a very welcoming and well organised environment. An abundance of posters, photographs and creative work from focused activities are attractively displayed to create a vibrant environment. The resources and equipment are very well maintained and cover all development areas. They are laid out in an imaginative way which enables children to move freely and make choices in their play. There are areas of continuous provision in the rooms which include role play, work shop areas and holistic play, and the secure outdoor area is spacious for children to enjoy energetic play, all of which contribute to children being cared for in a stimulating learning environment.

Children are kept extremely safe and secure in the organised environment. Staff carry out robust risk assessments and daily checklists and take steps to minimise hazards within the

setting. Consequently, this protects children from harm and injury. The fire evacuation procedure is very well established and practised regularly with the children and is usually carried out at different times of the nursery day. This means that all children are efficient at following the drill and ensures staff are aware of the action to take in a variety of situations. The drills are accurately logged and evaluated so staff can learn from these experiences. Furthermore, children are well protected from adults who are not vetted as they are fully supervised at all times and admission to the nursery is carefully monitored and admission given only to authorised persons.

Children are safeguarded because all staff have a very secure understanding of their responsibility with regard to child protection. They are able to recognise possible indicators of abuse and know they must record their concerns and report to their line manager as soon as possible. The person in charge is very knowledgeable about the local and national procedures and is fully aware of the appropriate action to take if she has a concern about a child in her care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children greatly benefit from a regular and secure routine which is skilfully adapted to meet their individual needs. There are three separate base rooms; children are grouped according to age. The rooms are set out in advance with a variety of activities, which follows the High/Scope approach to active learning, where children are encouraged to make choices, solve problems and take some responsibility for their own learning. Sessions include free choice, circle time, small group times for focused learning and snack and meal times. Children communicate well with staff and each other and contribute to all aspects within nursery life. For example, they respond to experiences and show feelings and interest as the equipment and material are used to stimulate their curiosity, a discussion about a fox prompted children to look for a book about a fox which was later shared at circle time.

Staff demonstrate a very secure understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use this to provide worthwhile activities and experiences to meet the needs of younger children. The weekly planning includes different aspects and provides a focus for staff. They get down on the floor and sensitively support children, who are clearly very confident in their surroundings. The staff are very interested in what children do and say and echo the sounds young children make and interpret meaning to their words, which encourages them to be competent language users.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a very good knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and this helps to support children's learning across all areas. Weekly planning sessions and effective use of time and resources by staff help them to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Staff use their knowledge of individual children to ensure they are sufficiently challenged and their learning opportunities maximised. The planning sheets include learning objectives of activities and some evaluation. Some individual challenges for children are promoted through good questioning by the knowledgeable key worker. However, differentiation for older and more able children is not formally recorded. As a result, children's individual needs are not always met. Observations on children are collated and transferred into children's individual learning journals and these are freely available to parents to ensure they are fully informed of their child's learning.

Children are very confident and enthusiastic when they arrive. They part from their career with ease and seek out their planning box to select a card which represents the first activity they plan to do. Children are very well behaved and confidently talk about the 'five golden rules' which include being kind to each other. The children are actively encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning. Interesting sensory and creative opportunities enable children to experiment and explore shape, colours, textures and sounds in a variety of different mediums. Their creative skills are promoted as they freely access a range of quality resources in the work shop; children take pride in their own collages and paintings. However, there are few opportunities to display these as children are very keen to take them home.

Older and more able children are beginning to write their names and are proud of their achievements, they tell staff, 'I wrote my name'. They recognise their self registration name card and put it on a display board when they arrive. The children thoroughly enjoy listening to group stories and individually access a range of books. Children learn to predict and investigate and to extend learning about the world, for example, access to information and communication technology. Children have daily access to two computers; one is operated by touch control and the other with mouse control. The older and more able children independently explore a range of quality educational programs. They talk about the program, what is happening on the screen and predict what will happen next.

Children's mathematical development is generally very well supported though daily routines. The older children count confidently, for example, they know how many spaces are available at the lunch table. Furthermore, there are activities for learning about shape, measure and space included in the planning. All children are also encouraged to choose a number card which indicates their table at meal times. However, there is no number line and few other numbers as labels to help assist children in practising and developing their understanding of mathematics.

Children use their imagination in role play, acting out scenes they have been involved with, for example, following a visit to the local primary school one child pretended to be the teacher. Children's curiosity of the natural world is developed as they observe large pieces of ice in the water tray and eagerly discuss with staff why it has made their hands cold and red. There are also opportunities for children to navigate the local area from occasional shopping trips and walks. Children also learn about the seasons, weather and days of the week. They plant seeds and watch them grow into flowers. Consequently, children are playing in an environment in which they are learning and having fun.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The staff are very conscientious in their efforts to ensure that the individual needs of the children in their care are met. An effective key worker system is in place and ensures every child is well known to all staff. They make choices as they eagerly access the age appropriate resources provided by the staff. Children are learning about other cultures when they celebrate festivals and as they access the quality resources which successfully reflect diversity in the wider community, for example, dressing up clothes, books and puzzles and dolls which represent different cultures and promote non gender biased play. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are thoroughly supported. The designated special needs coordinator is very experienced and totally committed to inclusion. Strategies for supporting children include maintaining close links with other professionals and individual

play plans which ensure that children are able to participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum. Parents are very complimentary, they feel the setting focuses on 'what children can do' and comment on how children are well supported to achieve their individual potential.

Children are very well behaved. They are beginning to learn what is right and wrong, have good manners, take turns and play cooperatively. Staff are calm, positive role models and treat all children with respect. They reinforce positive behaviour with meaningful praise and encouragement and the consistent use of boundaries. Children are busy and involved at all times so they do not become bored or frustrated. They enjoy each other's company and play together harmoniously, developing relationships. If a problem arises, for example, a minor conflict over a toy, staff are very skilful at supporting children to find solutions and resolve conflict between themselves.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is outstanding. This is due to the very strong and effective relationships with parents and carers that support children in the setting. Parents are fully included and are provided with relevant information about their child's learning. Staff are on hand at the start and end of each session to chat to parents, and this maintains links between nursery and home and ensures parents are fully involved. Parents receive detailed written information on the educational programme and are actively encouraged to be involved in their children's learning. They are asked to contribute to staff's understanding of their child's abilities and are invited to view their child's learning journal at any time. This enables them to extend their children's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting has robust procedures for staff recruitment, this ensures that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are suitable to work with children, so promoting their welfare. The management and staff are committed to continuous improvement and development of the nursery and of their own personal development. There are individual training and development plans in place for all staff. Appraisals and one-to-one sessions include opportunities to identify training needs and all staff regularly attend relevant courses.

Children's records are kept up to date and include their individual profile, enabling their needs to be met well. The registers for children and staff show times of arrival and departure. The correct staffing ratios are adhered to at all times, and there are effective contingency plans to cover holidays and sickness. All visitors sign the visitors book on arrival to show who is on the premises at all times, further promoting children's welfare. Their care is underpinned by all the required documentation, which is regularly reviewed and updated.

Leadership and management of the nursery education are good. A comprehensive operational plan includes all the policies and procedures in line with the National Standards. These are fully understood by staff and reviewed regularly, which positively contributes to children's health, safety and well-being. Staff and the management regularly evaluate activities and monitor the quality of provision. The setting has accurately identified its strengths and areas to develop, and there is a good commitment to constantly improving standards.

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 there were two recommendations raised which have both been successfully addressed. The provider agreed to ensure the medication records were countersigned by parents. Although staff do not routinely administer medication, except for ongoing medical conditions such as asthma and eczema, an appropriate permission form is in place and it would be vigilantly signed by parents prior to medication being administered. This action ensures children's well-being is promoted.

The provider was also asked to risk assess the serving of hot meals. This has also been addressed. A comprehensive risk assessment was undertaken and potential hazards identified were reduced, for example, children are seated prior to the food trolley arriving in the nursery. This ensures that children's safety is assured.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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

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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):

- provide more opportunities for children to display their individual creative work, and ensure children have regular opportunities to see numbers at their level. (also applies to nursery education)

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 the systems used for planning to differentiate in activities to ensure children's individual needs are met.

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