

Stonecroft Under 5s Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	140462
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Inspector	Maggie Thorp
Setting Address	100 Priory Road, Hornsey, London, N8 7HR
Telephone number	020 8340 7050
E-mail	
Registered person	London Borough of Haringey Early Years and Play
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stonecroft Children's Centre was registered in October 1999. It is managed by the London Borough of Haringey's Early Years and Play Service and is situated in Hornsey, at the foot of Muswell Hill.

The centre operates from a three story detached house. The children are divided into two groups and each have their own self contained playroom, bathroom and garden. All children use a large room known as 'the learning area', for lunch, large indoor activities and at the beginning and end of each day. Children also have access to a soft play room and a sensory room. There is a kitchen, laundry, office and reception area downstairs and staff room upstairs for adult use.

The centre serves the local community and provides groups and specialist services upstairs. The facilities for these include a large training and meeting room, and offices for the family support worker, speech and language therapist and the community programme co-ordinator.

The centre operates Monday through to Friday, from 08:00 - 17:45, all year round. There are currently 53 children from one to five years on roll. This includes 29 funded three and four year

olds, 21 children aged two, and three children under two years. There are 15 children who speak English as an additional language attending. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are 15 children who have disabilities and learning difficulties and this includes places set aside for children with speech and language difficulties.

The centre is managed by the head and three senior staff. Staff working directly with the children include 11 nursery officers who are all qualified, and of these four are part time; four centre assistants, one of whom is qualified, and one who is part time; and a qualified early years teacher. The nursery also has a cook, an information officer, a finance officer, a part time administrator, a site manager and there are a number of specialist staff attached to the centre.

The setting receives support from Haringey Early Years and Play Service and is currently part of the 'Quality Improvement in Learning and Teaching' quality assurance programme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning a lot about being healthy, good hygiene and how to care for themselves. They manage tasks such as toileting, nose wiping and hand washing very competently. This is because staff have made the resources children need to do these tasks very accessible, they praise children's use of them and provide just enough support for each child's level of development. However, indoors an appropriate temperature is not maintained sometimes to ensure children are warm enough and children are not reminded to put their coats on when playing outdoors to ensure they do not get cold.

Children are protected from infections and receive good care when they have accidents or are unwell. All staff have had paediatric first aid training and there are four fully qualified first aid trained staff in post. Parents are given clear guidance about childhood infections, and good hygiene is practiced throughout the centre. Parents provide written consent for medicines to be administered, any medicine given is recorded and witnessed.

Children are very well nourished by the healthy foods offered them and each child's particular needs and preferences are accommodated very well. Children enjoy helping themselves to drinks of water and fruit in the open snack table available for most of the day. Mealtimes are very calm, social occasions that promote children's independence skills and self esteem extremely well. Children sit in small groups with their key person. Food is served at the table and children wanting a second helping serve themselves. New children are given sensitive support to help them adjust to group mealtimes and soon begin to eat well.

A recent nursery project on healthy eating further encouraged children's good eating very effectively. Children learnt about how different foods effect their bodies. They grew, picked and ate such healthy foods as tomatoes and strawberries. This interest has been maintained and children following the theme of 'Ourselves' made a variety of salads chatting as they did about the food they help prepare and enjoy eating at home.

Younger children are becoming increasingly mobile and agile, as they play in the very well equipped outdoor play spaces. These are as well planned and thoughtfully resourced as the play areas indoors. They enjoy the choice of wheeled toys to ride on and transport things in. One child scoops up leaves and trundles a wheel barrow around the garden. Others follow each other around the garden on bikes. Many children enjoy the challenge the different climbing

apparatus offers. Staff stand beside guiding and advising as children practice and refine their physical skills.

Older children are challenged and enthused by the outdoor play. They heave and drag large wooden blocks and planks into place calling to staff and each other for assistance sometimes, as they build their roadway or castle. Many are becoming skilled at throwing and catching as staff play with them to help them develop these skills. These older children also enjoy the challenge of pedalling and steering bikes and cars up hill and free wheeling down in the new sloped garden.

Children use a wide variety of small tools and construction toys, and take part in activities that are helping them gain very good control of their finer movements. Children enjoy making large chalk drawings on the paved areas and using a house paint brush and bucket of water to paint the play house and benches outdoors. Indoors they chop and peel when cooking, twist, screw and fit together construction materials when making models, and carefully manoeuvre the computer mouse.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy the very well organised, stimulating, child friendly, environment that staff have created at the centre. Children's group rooms are set out in bays offering children a wide choice of accessible play materials to explore. Children move with confidence between areas as the workshop style lay out fosters children's independent learning very effectively. Interesting displays add to the attractiveness of each room and corridor. They feature photographs of the children and of projects and events at the centre. Children often stop to look at these and to recall their experiences.

The outdoor areas are equally well organised and children are able to move freely between indoor and outdoor environments as they play and learn. The gardens have many interesting features that children enjoy. There are sculptures, patches for children to garden in, sensory areas, and covered places where children can draw, paint or sit and look at books in the fresh air. These are all very well used by children.

The arrangement of a base room for each of the two children's groups and a centre room for children to eat, rest and use at the beginning and end of each day works extremely well. This area is also sometimes used for lively indoor play and dancing. Children from different groups are able to meet up here. Children also enjoy using the sensory room and soft play area. There are ample toilets and bathrooms so that children can take their time over toileting and do not feel rushed.

Children indirectly benefit from the well organised space for staff and parents. Staff have office space for record keeping and a bright, light staff room to relax in. Parents and visitors are welcomed and can sit in comfort in the reception area and there are a number of rooms upstairs for the additional services that the centre offers. In addition a well equipped kitchen enables food to be cooked on the premises.

Children's safety is well protected by the comprehensive risk assessment in place and the many steps taken to prevent children from accessing hazards. Any new equipment or any resources that staff have concerns about are risk assessed for example, the use of tower fans and the

new lift that has been installed. Fire safety is very good. Great care is taken to ensure the building can be evacuated quickly and without frightening the children.

Children's security is safeguarded by the careful monitoring of those using the centre. All visitors are greeted at reception and their presence recorded. The external gate and front door have to be opened by office staff and the outdoor play areas are fully enclosed. Careful notes are made regarding who is allowed to collect children and children and staff are signed and out so that everyone is aware of who is on the premises. However, on occasions appropriate staff child ratios in the garden are not maintained. There are sufficient staff on duty but they do not always move from indoors to outdoors when the majority of children are outside. This limits how much support these children are able to receive and how well supervised they are.

Children's well being is protected by staff's good understanding of child protection issues, an awareness of the signs of possible abuse and of the procedures to follow if they are concerned about a child. This is underpinned by the well informed lead person for safeguarding children and a comprehensive policy that has recently been up dated. However, not all the old copies of this have been replaced with new so staff consulting an old copy in the designated person's absence will not be fully informed about who has to be notified about any concerns. Good links are maintained with other agencies and any issues or concerns are acted on promptly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Younger children are finding out about the world using their whole bodies and all their senses. Children exploring a corn flour and water in a builder's tray are very focussed. They stretch and reach across the tray to scrape up and gather the dripping mixture in their hands. One child says 'look I've got worms'. Another child is absorbed in burying objects in the sand pit, she smoothes the sand over the top and notices the marks her fingers make. One child, with the help of a member of staff, tries to make animals with clay. He is shown how to cut a mouth into the clay head. Children playing in the garden experiment with different ways of striking the large hanging chime bars and they listen to the variety of sounds they make.

Children are growing increasingly confident and independent because the day is structured well. There is a set routine so children feel secure as they know what happens next. However, within this structure they are able to make decisions and to choose from a wide range of well organised. These are matched to different children's ages, stages of development and interests very effectively. At the beginning of the school year many children are new and do not know where things are and whether they are allowed to help themselves. Staff skilfully support such children so they are not overwhelmed with the wealth of materials provided, but help them find their way round gradually. A new child is shown where to find an apron for water play and another a car to put on the road they have made. Children are engaged, involved and learning because of the role adults take.

They are rapidly developing new words and ways of expressing themselves through the quality of individual attention each child receives. As children have fun on the climbing frame staff describe their actions and positions for example, how they are climbing up, crawling under or moving sideways. Children enjoy the small group times when they play games that help them learn each others names. During the first group time of the morning the choices for that day are explained and children are encouraged to say which activity they want to begin with. Many staff sign as they talk and children are becoming competent in this form of communication too.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children engage in a wide range of meaningful activities with great enthusiasm because the staff have a firm understanding of the Foundation Stage guidance and how to implement it. Plans are based on broad themes. These are developed well across the six areas of learning, involve parents and are of interest to the children. The theme of 'healthy eating' for example, was extended to foster children's mathematical development very effectively. Children counted and sorted fruit and vegetables, and made patterns with them. In addition, parents brought healthy recipes in and took home booklets about healthy foods. However, plans are not monitored to ensure each aspect of the learning areas is regularly provided for children to explore.

Observations of each child's interests and achievements are systematically carried out in each area of learning, their next steps are identified. Staff regularly meet, discuss and plan activities and experiences that will help children progress. The stepping stones of learning in each area are used to chart this and children are making good progress in most aspects of all the learning areas. Children's profile books provide rich evidence of how children are progressing for both staff and parents. Overall the planning and assessment systems challenge children as do the high expectations staff have of what children can achieve.

Children personal social and emotion development is fostered extremely well. Children are very confident and greet each other with pleasure. They have secure supportive relationships with their key workers and other children and enjoy their company. They enjoy being together at family group times and each child is given time to talk about what they want to. Children engage in the experiences offered with interest and enthusiasm and are they able to sustain their concentration and to see things through. Children looking for spiders are very focussed as they discuss, search for and then make a book about spiders. A child interested in numbers spends over half an hour on a counting activity.

Children communicate well using words and signing. They listen to others and contribute their own ideas and describe their thinking. Children listening to the Three Little Pigs story shared their ideas on why the wolf failed to blow the brick house down. They know the names and sounds of some letters of the alphabet although activities to further promote these skills are not always planned into each theme to extend this. Children enjoy attempting to write their names; some children are writing letters clearly from memory. Others copy from their name card and they spell their names out as they write. Children enjoy story times and looking at books; they join in the stories they know well using signs and words. They look at the little displays that have questions for children to answer around the walls and use the well resourced writing areas. Children and staff also make books about some of the exciting events at the centre for example caring for and seeing frogs develop. These activities all encourage children's interest in reading and writing effectively.

Children count and recognise written numbers. They read written numbers displayed for example, one boy says 'I'm number four', as he pedals round the garden on a bike with that number fixed to the front. Children are learning concepts of sizes and shape. Some compare the height of towers they have built. Children noticing another's jewellery are encouraged to described the shapes they see and they identify a cross, triangle and circle. A child interested in counting is supported as he goes higher and higher counting groups of squares accurately until he is counting beyond 20. Then he sets off with an empty box to fill it with 21 things. Children are also learning simple addition and subtraction using pens and cubes.

Children explore a wide variety different materials and learn about the natural world through the exciting planned and spontaneous opportunities staff provide. Recently children have had first hand experience of seeing the life cycle of both frogs and chickens. They took it in turns to take the eggs home to ensure they were regularly turned in the incubator and were excited to see one chick hatch out. Children finding a spider in the shoe box were helped to think about why it needed a safer place to live. The next day they went out to see it in the garden. They learnt all about how spiders build webs and why. However, they have had few recent opportunities to explore the local environment. Children use computers with increasing skill as staff help them learn how to control the mouse and how programmes work.

Children's creativity and imagination is fostered very effectively. They enjoy the wealth of pretend play materials available. Children dress up and act out situations from home with great enthusiasm. Staff join in to extend children's play. Children dressed their 'babies' and said they were going to work. A member of staff offered to stay home and tidy up. This lead to the children showing her round the home corner giving her different jobs to do. Children are very creative. Recently they painted pictures of each member of staff and these were displayed along side their photograph. Children drawing in the garden are helped to look at natural objects and draw what they see. The painting, drawing and modelling materials that are set out in workshop areas both indoors and outside encourage their interest well. The freedom children have to experiment with mark making materials and to use their own ideas also contributes to this.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are helped to grow extremely confident and independent. They receive excellent individual care because their needs and circumstances are so well known and understood by staff. This is underpinned firstly by the highly effective key person system in place and secondly by the warmth of all the staff. The settling in process begins with a home visit when the child's key person and their parents meet and share information about that child's needs. It continues with daily discussion with parents about how each child is settling in. Family photographs and information the key person has gathered help new children gradually feel secure and able to enjoy all that is provided. Extra support further eases children into establishing friendships in their group. One child was helped by his key worker making a book of photographs of the child's friends in the nursery.

Children are given excellent support in learning to value the different cultures and abilities of others because this well thought out in every aspect of the centre's provision. Right from the beginning detailed notes are made for example, of key words a child may use in their first language, of who the important people are in the child's life and what they call them and this is all used to support the new child. The resources and books reflect the diversity of the children. Events and visitors are invited into the centre to reinforce children's own background and further extend children's experiences of different cultures. Parents come and share how they celebrate a faith festival, performers of national dances and music visit and perform for children. The themes children explore always reflect the diversity of their cultures for example, children exploring 'healthy eating' prepare foods from many different parts of the world. A previous theme was 'traditional stories' and parents were invited to come into the centre and contribute their stories.

Resources and activities are used that offer children positive images of diversity. African materials back a display; dolls, dressing up clothes and books allow children to explore similarities

and differences. Children playing with dolls house furniture and dolls act out and discuss why one doll uses a wheelchair. They listen with interest to staff describing when they were in that situation. This leads to children remembering that they have a friend who has recently left to go to school who uses a wheel chair.

Excellent support is provided for children with disabilities and learning difficulties. This is underpinned by staff's strong commitment to ensure that all children are included and valued. Children with severe disabilities are provided with high levels of support and appropriate resources. Ways of including such children in each activity are carefully discussed and planned so that all children paint, listen to stories, laugh, play and learn together. Parents say how much they appreciate this. Some places are set aside for children with language delay. These children are able to make excellent progress. This is partly because staff, parents and the speech and language therapist plan, work and review each child's progress in partnership. In addition, the song times, stories and much of the conversation with all the children is supported by signing. Many children are very competent at this. During a story which included a sheep, one child practiced and practiced the sign for a sheep as she listened and beamed with pride when she managed it.

Children's behaviour is very good. This is aided by the superb model staff provide. They use calm voices, encourage discussion about disputes and show great care and concern for the children and each other. Children are frequently praised, and they soon learn the simple and very positively expressed 'golden rules' which older children enjoy explaining to younger siblings. When a child has a particular behaviour problem the staff and parents plan together how best they can reinforce the child's good behaviour. They make sure that occurrences of the unwanted behaviour are dealt with calmly by one or two consistent adults that the child knows well. Periods of good behaviour are followed up with a tangible reward for the child. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered very well.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Children have a strong sense of belonging as a result of this. Parents are extremely well informed about the service and have lots of opportunities to talk to their child's key worker. A comprehensive welcome pack is given to the parents of new children. Parents also receive quick reference guides to the ways they can help and be involved in the nursery and to settling new children successfully. All the appropriate parental consent is obtained and information about how to complain is displayed and included in the parent pack.

Excellent clearly labelled displays on the current theme keep parents informed of how these help children progress in each area of learning. Individual plans for how each child will develop and learn made with the parents of both nursery education funded children and younger children. Specific next steps are agreed and recorded for each child, for example to 'count above 5' and staff suggest how parents can do this at home too.

During parent staff meetings parents look at and contribute to their child's the profile book that charts the child's achievements throughout their time at the centre. These include photographs, written observations, and examples of the child's work. Each child's progress is clearly shown through these books. Some parents have two volumes to take home and keep as a reminder of all their child has achieved by the time they go to school. Staff are planning to bring them into the group rooms so make them even more accessible to children and parents.

Additional activities are arranged for parents as part of the wider remit of the centre. There are parenting courses, first aid, food hygiene courses, breast feeding groups and smoking

cessation sessions. Special support groups are arranged for parents with children with disabilities or learning difficulties. Parents are active in fund raising, contributing to the alterations and decoration of the centre and in get involved with wider issues concerning the centre and how the service will be provided in the future. The message conveyed to parents by all this is: 'it is your centre'.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and confident primarily because of the quality and commitment of the staff team. Staff obviously enjoy working with the children and their enthusiasm is communicated to the children very effectively. They share very good relationships with staff who have been thoroughly vetted for their suitability to work with young children. Children are eager to explore the very well organised and resourced environment and are learning as they play.

Children's welfare and individual needs are generally well met by the group who have appropriate records in place to support their understanding of each child. Records are kept confidentially maintaining the child's privacy. However, there are weaknesses some aspects of monitoring their care in order to avoid the occasional lapses in ensuring that children are warm enough and in deploying sufficient staff to supervise and support children's outdoor play. Sound, comprehensive policies, and risk assessment cover all aspects of the centre to children's best effect. However, old procedures are not always replaced with new in each set of policies kept to ensure the correct guidance is available, whichever file is consulted.

There is an extensive range of integrated services provided by the centre. These go well beyond the core nursery education and integrated day care. They are well targeted as a result of consultation with the centre's users and wider community. Links with childminders have been made and the centre actively develops ways to support them in their work. There are strong links with local schools and other agencies. The services and support offered to children with disabilities and learning difficulties and their families are very good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. The management team have well defined roles and spend considerable time in the children's rooms observing practice and supporting staff. However, weaknesses in the evaluation of the six weekly plans result in children being able to explore some aspects of each learning area less often than others. The staff team are well qualified and there are excellent opportunities for staff to undertake additional training and responsibility to further develop the quality of what children receive.

Children are happy and learning because the manager has clear aims in line with the Foundation Stage guidance. The importance of working in partnership with parents is integral to the service and very practical ways of doing this have been put in place. The time allocated for staff meetings, one to one supervision and time for staff to reflect on, discuss and record their work with children further underpins the high quality of this provision.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the recommendation made has been acted on very effectively. This was to produce a written risk assessment which identifies any actions to be taken and to

implement this. Risks are assessed and the appropriate action to minimise these is identified and taken across all aspects of the provision to safeguard children.

The point for consideration in regard to children's nursery education was to develop records of what children have achieved and their current interests, so that progression is obvious to practitioners and parents and the next steps are even more clearly matched and simply stated in activity plans. The way children's progress is recorded now is very clear and the next steps are stated as simple targets that staff and parents work together in helping children achieve.

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 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 room temperatures indoors are monitored and are appropriate for children and children are warm enough when playing outdoors
- ensure staff are deployed so that child staff ratios are always sufficient indoors and outside to supervise and support children's play
- ensure that information about when to contact the regulator is consistent in all written policies

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):

- continue to develop the current good planning and evaluation in place to ensure every aspect of each learning area is regularly planned for children to explore

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