

Watford & District Mencap Childrens Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130646
Inspection date	13 September 2007
Inspector	Julie Whitelaw
Setting Address	63-81 High Street, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 1EQ
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Registered person	Watford & District Mencap
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Sessional 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?

The Activities Club has been registered since 1997, is run by Watford Mencap and offers a range of services for families of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who live in the South West Hertfordshire area.

The setting utilise the ground floor of the premises. They have sole use of the Activities playroom, Rainbow room, a large soft play and ball pool room, cloakrooms, kitchen and an office. There is a secure garden which is easily accessed from all areas.

The Activities Club provides after school care, a Saturday Club and holiday play schemes (out of school). The centre opens five days a week all year round. The after school club runs from 15:30 to 18:30 or 19:00. The Saturday Club runs from 09:30 to 15:30 and the holiday play schemes from 10:00 to 15:00. The setting may care no more than 15 children at any one time. Currently, there are 40 children on roll.

A team of 18 part-time staff work with the children during the week. A small team of volunteers assists them to offer a high ratio of adult to children at all times. Additional staff are employed to work during the holiday play schemes. The Saturday Club has its own team of staff led by a

manager. All senior staff hold a Level 3 qualification, in addition two other staff members hold an early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from fresh air as they play outside in the newly refurbished garden. This area is being developed as an extension of the indoor environment. Their physical skills are promoted well as they ride bikes, play football and explore the sand. The indoor soft play area is used on a daily basis and is an excellent resource to develop children's physical skills. Children gain confidence as they take risks in a safe environment and scream with delight as they climb the stairs and jump across the ball pool. They set their own challenges as they jump higher and further, which promotes their self-esteem.

Children learn self-care skills as they wash their hands before eating. Appropriate procedures are followed when nappy changing which help to reduce the risk of the spread of infection. The environment is well organised and hygiene of all areas is maintained through regular cleaning. For example, the soft play area recently been cleaned by contractors. Staff obtain information from parents if children have special medical requirements and complete training to support children with such needs.

Children's health is promoted well as they are given nutritious food. During dinner, they are introduced to a variety of vegetables and encouraged to try them. Through discussion children develop an understanding of why certain foods are good for you. As they observe tomatoes and peppers growing in pots in the garden, children begin to understand where food comes from. A small area has been sectioned off for children to plant more vegetables and learn how they grow. This will extend their learning. Under the new management, a focus will be for children to become more involved in the preparation of meals and snacks to promote their understanding of healthy eating. Drinks are accessible to ensure children stay hydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe and welcoming environment. Risk assessments are in place and reviewed when necessary. Staff visually check the premises each day to ensure it is safe. Potential hazards have been identified and addressed. For example, a safety chain is in place on the main door and covers are in place on electric sockets. A changing table that can be adjusted electronically promotes children's safety during nappy changing. In the garden, safety measures such as a bolt on the back gate and a high perimeter fence, ensure that this area is safe for the children to explore independently. The sand pit is covered when not in use to prevent contamination. Staff demonstrate a knowledge of health and safety issues, for example, as they correctly lift the large cover that protects the sand pit.

Toys and resources are appropriate for the children who attend. They are checked daily to ensure they are safe and regularly cleaned. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and closely supervise children at all times. They promote children's understanding of how to stay safe through discussion during the daily routine. For example, children are guided to the large cushions when reading books so that other children do not fall over them.

Children are protected as effective recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to ascertain the suitability of staff to work with children.

Children's safety is promoted as appropriate child protection policies and procedures are in place. However, staff's knowledge of child protection is limited. This potentially compromises children's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle well and happily greet their friends who arrive from other schools. The clear routine of the session and close relationships that have formed with the staff ensures that children feel secure within the setting. Staff listen to and value what children say, they talk with them about what they are doing and challenge them to promote their learning. Children independently select what resources they want to play with and decide if they want to play indoors or out in the garden. Their personal and social development is promoted well. They begin to understand the difference between right and wrong through the daily routine and learn that they need to share and take turns. They work together as they tidy away a large rug and the toys before dinner.

Planning is in place and based on themes. Resources and activities are organised to reinforce and extend children's learning. For example, as children draw around their hands they learn about parts of their body. At circle time they listen attentively to a story. Staff are skilled at asking questions that challenge children and encourage them to think. Staff are also led by the children's interests and when children request to act out the story they are able to do so. Children join in singing actions songs that name parts of the body and confidently suggest how the song can be changed. They enjoy their time at the setting and have fun.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are warmly welcomed by name on arrival. As they see photos and their work displayed on the walls they develop a sense of belonging. Staff are sensitive, caring and know the children well. All children are fully included in the routine of the day regardless of their disability. A range of resources such as books, dolls, small world toys and musical instruments promote children's understanding of the wider world. Planning is now in place to extend children's understanding of different cultures and festivals through craft and cooking activities.

Children behave well and respond positively to the clear consistent boundaries staff set. They develop an understanding of acceptable behaviour through the simple explanations staff give. All children who attend the setting have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The high ratio of adult to child enables staff to give children individual attention.

Staff understand the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers to meet children's needs. The verbal exchange of information at the beginning and end of the session ensures that parents are informed of the days events and the progress children make. The setting are further developing the partnership with parents through newsletters and family days at the centre. However, parents do not currently receive written information about the setting, therefore, are not fully informed to enable all to work together to support the children's well-being.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Effective systems are in place to ensure that staff working with children are safe to do so. Children benefit from high adult to child ratios which are above the minimum requirements. The outside play area has recently been refurbished and the focus is now on using this area as an extension of the indoor play area. The organisation of resources has been improved to give children more independence and free choice in their play. The soft play area, sensory room and rainbow room are used effectively to promote children's learning. The recently introduced planning ensures children make progress. Staff are also led by the children's interests. This ensures children are occupied, have fun and enjoy the time they are at the setting.

Staff work well together and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The newly appointed manager of the centre has a clear understanding of how children learn through play and is a good role model. Fortnightly team meetings and regular appraisals are utilised to promote the professional development of staff. Weaknesses have been identified and an action plan is currently being developed to improve the outcomes for the children. The required documentation is in place and maintained confidentially to promote the welfare, care and learning of the children who attend. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the provider was asked to further develop planning to ensure all children experience a stimulating range of activities that promote learning in all areas. The setting now has planning in place, based around themes. Staff also plan the environment and activities to link in with the current theme. This promotes children's learning.

They were also asked to further develop observations and assessments to clearly track the progress children make and help them move on to the next steps in their learning. Staff are beginning to observe and assess children. They have started to set targets to help children make progress.

The setting was also asked to improve knowledge and develop systems for the recording of complaints, in line with regulations. The complaints log is now in place and complaints would be recorded appropriately. This promotes children well-being.

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 the 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

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 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):

- further develop knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and procedures
- ensure parents receive written information about the setting that includes details of policies and procedures that are available to parents and information about activities provided for 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