

Ashcroft & Ramridge Community Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY278843
Inspection date	30 October 2007
Inspector	Margaret Coyne
Setting Address	186 Ashcroft Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 9AB
Telephone number	01582 402 812
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Registered person	Ashcroft & Ramridge Tenants & Residents Ltd.
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Ashcroft and Ramridge Community Nursery opened in 2004 and operates from three rooms in a purpose-built building in Luton, Bedfordshire. A maximum of 46 children may attend the setting at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. The setting also provides wrap-around care for 10 children and is open for 38 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 34 children aged from six weeks to under five years on roll. Of these, eight children receive funding for early education. Children attend the breakfast club and after school club. Children come from the local catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 15 members of staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications. Seven staff are working towards a Level 3 qualification. The nursery has one volunteer. The nursery receives support from the local authority and a qualified teacher from within the school.

The nursery is part of a children's centre and provides additional services which are run on satellite sites. These provide health and education promotion for families as well as training for parents.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, clean, bright and hygienic environment. Staff are vigilant and thorough, adhering to procedures and routines that ensure the children remain in good health. Through the good examples set by staff and the enjoyable activities, children learn the importance of hygiene and personal care. They have a clear understanding of why they must wash their hands after messy activities, using the toilet and before eating meals and snacks. Positive reinforcement by staff and posters in the bathroom help children remember to do so. Children learn about keeping their bodies healthy through discussion, topics and interesting role play, such as doctors and dentists. Babies good health is safeguarded because staff follow appropriate health and hygiene guidelines. For example, they have excellent procedures in the milk kitchen and have a policy where outdoor shoes are not worn in the baby room. All bedding is clean and children are able to follow their own routines for sleep, food and milk-times. Children are protected from cross-infection through rigorous nappy changing procedures and with the use of towel rolls, boxes of tissues for children to wipe their own noses and by the exclusion of children who have an infectious illness.

All staff hold a first aid certificate and most have been trained to use 'epi-pens' in the case of an allergic reaction. This ensures appropriate attention can be given to any child in the event of an accident. All of the required documentation and consents are in place to enable the staff to act in children's best interests if they require medical attention. An excellent system is used to keep children's medication secure. This ensures medication is only given to the child it is intended for with rigorous checks in place. Prior consent is obtained from parents before administering any medication. This ensures children's well-being and safety.

Children are nourished and understand the benefits of a healthy diet. They have fresh fruit each day at breakfast and snack times and are encouraged to try new tastes and experiences with different types of fruit. For example, water melon and kiwi fruits. The nursery has gained a healthy eating award and continually work towards this by providing children with varied, healthy and nutritious meals. Some children have breakfast at the nursery and are offered a wide choice of cereals. Lunch is provided from the adjoining school kitchen and the management team work closely with the cook to improve meals for the children. Tea is also provided by the nursery and ensures those children staying all day have a balanced diet. A menu is displayed for parents and shows the wide range of meals on offer. Children thoroughly enjoy their fish, mashed potatoes, peas and corn asking for second helpings to satisfy their appetites. Staff sit with the children eating their meals together and a wonderful social time is created between them. Children learn table manners and their social skills are developed as they join in conversations together. Children have access to drinking water from the water dispenser and younger children are offered regular drinks in beakers. Babies are content because staff feed them in a restful manner ensuring their individual needs are met. All children's dietary needs are met because staff gain full information from parents about any allergies or dietary requirements. Children's placemats display this information to ensure their individual needs are adhered to.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their health and develop and enhance their physical skills. All ages and abilities play in the outside area balancing and co-ordinating their bodies on a variety of exciting equipment. They have fun sharing tricycles and sit and ride cars with friends, climbing up, over and down small climbing frames, tyres and slides. They throw and kick balls, catch bean bags, use hoops, chase bubbles and dance in the pasta tray enjoying the crunch of the pasta under foot. Children become adept at using hand and eye co-ordination and dexterity as they thread laces through cards, make necklaces with pasta, use different implements to make marks and construct using a variety of equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is paramount to the organisation of the nursery. Risk assessments are carried out regularly to identify any potential hazards. Staff act quickly upon this information to remove risks to keep the children free from harm. Effective security measures are in place to protect the children from harm and promote safety around the nursery with the children. Accident records are maintained and shared with parents and information from these is used to highlight any areas to look at within their risk assessment. The setting is well planned with lots of space for children to move freely and safely around activities and areas. Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe in the group as they explain and practise simple procedures, such as emergency evacuation and the boundaries necessary for children to contribute to keeping themselves safe. For example, picking up toys in case someone trips on them, safety rules on the outdoor equipment and walking inside. Staff effectively explain safety to the children in a simple but positive manner aimed at their level of understanding so they can operate safely within their environment. Supervision is high throughout the nursery and any sleeping children are checked regularly. Extra precautions are taken when entering the baby room. Visitors are asked to check that a child is not behind the door before opening it.

Children have access to an abundance of safe, good quality, age-appropriate toys, furniture and equipment. These are well organised throughout the nursery in child height storage units to encourage children to operate independently as they gain access to their resources. Children freely choose any extra resources they wish to play with and help to tidy away after they have finished. Sensitive reminders by staff encourage the children to share in the responsibility for their own safety and that of others. Children show respect for their toys and equipment using it appropriately and safely. Resources are well presented to encourage children to participate. The outdoor area is planned as an outdoor classroom with a wide variety of stimulating and challenging play. Children are able to free-flow between the two areas extending their play for themselves. Inside the rooms are divided into separate areas for activities, such as the home corners, creative areas, quiet play areas and construction areas. One end of the main room has a lovely space for cots with soft coloured curtains and defused lighting. This provides a restful, comfortable area for younger children to rest or sleep. Adjoining this is a comfortable book area with soft cushions and a wide range of books. Children enjoy relaxing here as they share stories with staff. The baby room has a separate milk kitchen and laundry room. There is ample space for children to play and gain mobility as they use the domestic style furniture to pull themselves up. The playrooms are bright and inviting because children are able to display their art work on the walls.

Children of all ages have the opportunity for outings in their local area. The nursery has the use of their own minibus and all necessary precautions are taken to ensure children's safety. Age-appropriate car seats and restraints are in place and stringent safety rules are observed on any trips. The driver of the minibus has completed a Luton Borough Council driving course

to ensure children's safety at all times. When children go for walks in the local area they learn about road safety and enjoy visits from the fire service and police who also contribute to helping them learn about keeping safe.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted through current policies and procedures for the protection of children. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection through in-house training that has been completed. All procedures are up to date and all supporting literature and comprehensive records are in place and available for all staff. Their good practice ensures any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive manner and a designated person is responsible to share information with outside agencies to ensure children are protected at all times. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of any allegations made against them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, content and secure throughout the nursery. They confidently access the stimulating range of activities and are forming secure relationships with staff and other children. This is a happy environment where children and staff express themselves by spontaneously singing nursery rhymes and songs. Staff have a secure awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this has a positive effect on the rapid progress younger children make. Staff plan activities in line with this framework and have gained a secure knowledge about how children achieve. Their development is recorded against this framework and the details gained provide a clear picture of the children's progress. This information follows the children through the nursery and provides a clear starting point for them as they reach the Foundation Stage. All children receive lots of cuddles, praise and reassurance, developing strong bonds with the staff team. This increases their sense of well-being and contentment. They clearly benefit from the routines as they know what to expect and staff make these flexible to encourage children to initiate some of their own play.

Children are attentive and concentrate during group story times. They enjoy shared reading with staff as they relax together to look at books. Children of all ages and abilities use a range of creative materials, such as paint, sticking, playdough, cornflower mix and other messy activities. They learn through these experiences and are directly involved and interested in their play. A wide range of sensory play has been developed for children to participate in. They discover how things feel and taste as they do hand print paintings, discover a tray with soft and shiny materials and explore the musical toys. Bubbles are a great favourite with the younger children as they learn to blow them and have fun trying to catch them. Children take part in numerous singing sessions and enjoy trying to do some of the actions to the songs such as 'twinkle, twinkle little star' and make requests for their favourite songs. Children of all ages learn about responsibilities and are allowed to make errors, decisions and choices as they select activities and share their play with others.

All children acquire new knowledge and skills and respond to challenges because the staff show an interest in them. They talk and listen to the children, asking questions to extend their play and help them think. Opportunities are provided for them to build on their natural curiosity as learners. They are interested, inquisitive and keen to take part. For example, with messy play activities, crayons, and tactile opportunities. A strong emphasis is placed on developing children's self-assurance, confidence and sense of belonging. Babies and young children develop their communication skills as they respond to others around them. With the use of verbal and non-verbal language they make their needs known to staff who are adept at interpreting these needs. Children's independence skills are developing as they select activities for themselves

and manage their personal hygiene. However, some areas for independence are not fully extended. For example, at mealtimes staff lay the tables, serve the children's food and clear away after them. When children play in the outside area they can make their own choices with the free-flow system but do not have the opportunity to get their own coats. Therefore, children's ability to operate independently during these times is not fully supported.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing well, supported by staff that have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. Plans cover all six areas of learning comprehensively and there is a good observation and assessment system in place which is used to inform planning for the next step in individual children's learning. Additional scrap books contain examples of the children's work, photographs of them taking part in activities and written observations detailing the activity. The planning ensures appropriate challenges are set for the children to make progress at their own pace. However, the plans do not document how the staff can adapt activities for children who are older or more able or to document the key questions and vocabulary to introduce. This potentially means that some children may not be challenged sufficiently. Both the plans and children's assessments link closely to the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. There are effective systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff look at how they can support children's learning without taking over their play. They know when to step back and wait to be invited into the children's play. A high ratio of adults to children means there are a lot of staff available to support the children and they have a growing awareness of when to step back and let a child lead the activity and make their own suggestions.

Children are involved in their play. They are motivated because staff make the activities fun and exciting. They play well together and friendship groups are forming. Children seek out their friends to join in their play. For example, as they become doctors and patients and when painting the playhouse. They sit together at circle time and share personal experiences with the rest of the group. The children's natural enthusiasm to learn and be part of a group shines through as they manage their behaviour, join in play and help others around them. Their literacy and language skills develop through singing simple songs and listening and joining in with stories. Shared reading time is a relaxed comfortable time for them to share books with each other and staff. They listen attentively at story time and join in familiar refrains with stories, such as 'We're all going on a bear hunt'. Children respond to what they see, smell and touch as they explore and investigate sand, water, pasta and cornflower mixtures. They extend their vocabulary with new words to describe how things feel or smell. For example, a group of children discuss the cornflower mix and try to decide if it is hard or soft, they talk about the colour and one child decides that it smells of cauliflowers. They practise mark-making skills using pens, pencils, paintbrushes and chalk and are aware that we write for different purposes. More able children are beginning to form recognisable letters of their name and can trace their name cards with growing skills. Children develop an understanding of sounds and letters as they link these in their name or other familiar words. Their emergent reading skills are developing because staff have clear labels on everyday objects that children can relate to.

Children develop simple counting and calculation skills and recognise numbers. They recognise written numbers and know that a two and a five is 25 when counting paper money in the play shop. More able children count beyond 10 with confidence and some children can apply simple calculation as they take objects away from a group and know how many are left. They become aware of and use mathematical language to name shapes, recognise different positions and size. For example, they sing the shape song, draw shapes in the air and can recognise different

shapes in their environment. Children enjoy different activities that extends and reinforces their mathematical thinking. They play dominos and take part in some simple science to help them think things through for themselves, such as floating and sinking objects.

Children build and construct using various shapes and connecting parts. For example, they put a train track together and use trial and error to solve problems with jigsaw pieces or construction pieces to help them fit together. Children develop a sense of time. They have an understanding of their daily routine, knowing when it is time for snack, meals, tidy-up time or home time. They have opportunity to discover programmable toys, such as 'V-Tec' computers or tape recorders. However, they have limited opportunity for regular use of the computer because it is not positioned in the main playroom. This hinders children's overall understanding of information technology. They explore how things feel as they scrape out pumpkins seeds to make Halloween lanterns. A topic about festivals and celebrations is extended with a trip for children to visit a multi-cultural area of town, explore the shops and view how other people dress, eat and live. They enjoy looking at the wide range of different fruits and vegetables on display, extending their awareness of the world around them.

Opportunities are provided for children to express themselves creatively. For example, children enjoy making firework pictures. Their work is individual and based on their own concepts and images of fireworks. They show pride in the work they produce and are praised by staff. Many other examples of the children's art work is displayed around the nursery showing the different topics they have been involved in. For example, a group collage showing the changing seasons with a tree made from autumn leaves. Role play is another aspect of play where children really use their imaginations. They enjoy dressing up and taking on roles depicted from their costumes, such as doctors, snake charmers, police, shop keepers, as well as taking on the home makers role in the kitchen area. They have fun initiating role play, communicating with their peers to act out experiences and express their views and feelings. Children's physical development is greatly enhanced by the free-flow system between the indoor and outdoor areas. They use their skills in varying ways to produce a desired effect, such as climbing, balancing on tyres, riding tricycles and dancing in a pasta tray.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have access to a meaningful range of resources and activities to promote a positive view of the wider world. Diversity is celebrated in the nursery through discussion, books, music and enjoying different celebrations and festivals. For example, a group of children and a member of staff dress in Indian costumes. They use a scarf as a snake and dance a snake charmers dance to the music. Children benefit from the staff's positive attitudes which help them learn about people who are different to themselves. All children are valued and respected as individuals and all their needs are well documented and implemented. Staff are kind and caring towards the children which impacts on the way the children view themselves and those around them. Cuddles and reassurance are freely given because staff are sensitive to the children's feelings. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff make every effort to demonstrate to children the benefits of getting on with each other and the importance of respecting and valuing everyone's differences. All children are welcomed into the nursery and appropriate plans and systems are in place to support any children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those children who speak English as an additional language are well supported by staff. They learn through sing and sign and baby signing. Staff talk to the children and this helps them gain an understanding of the English language.

Children have a good understanding of the boundaries within the nursery and respond to direction from adults in a positive way. A consistent approach is managed by all adults. This impacts clearly on children's understanding of the boundaries and increases their sense of security and confidence because they know what is expected of them. Behaviour management issues are managed effectively and children respond to the appropriate strategies used, such as distraction, explanation and compromise. Staff use praise and encouragement to raise children's awareness between right and wrong and this impacts on their self-esteem. Positive responses and language are used to deal with any negative situations. This helps children feel valued and to recognise that there are consistent boundaries in place. Children are learning to share in the responsibility for their own behaviour as they learn to listen to others, take turns and being kind to their friends. Children are occupied and engaged in stimulating activities throughout the sessions which again has a positive impact on their behaviour.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. This contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging and well-being. Staff are approachable, welcoming and friendly and make every effort to build effective relationships with parents. This helps parents feel secure and at ease, confident with the care provided for their child. Parents are fully informed about their child's progress and achievements and their involvement impacts greatly on the children's safety, care and learning. Notice boards are available throughout the nursery which are regularly updated and include information about the nursery procedures, healthy eating, planning for activities and information on children's health. Parents have access to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and information is also provided about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Induction days and parents evenings give staff and parents further opportunity to share information how these areas are implemented in the nursery education and care of their child. Parents are invited to attend consultation evenings to share their child's development records so they can share in their progress and achievements and be involved in their child's learning. They receive information about current topics and are invited to participate extending activities at home with their child. Daily communication sheets are used to share information with parents about their child's day at the nursery and helps them feel part of that day. Parents have filled in questionnaires for the nursery which provides valuable feedback on the nursery's performance. These are very complimentary and any suggestions are actioned wherever possible. Letters from parents have also been received which compliment the staff and the nursery. For example, they describe staff as motivated and professional with the nursery providing a family like environment for the children. These strong relationships have a positive impact on the children's sense of security and confidence.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of Leadership and Management is good. The nursery has a dedicated staff team who present themselves as positive role models for the children. A good mix of mature and younger staff helps them work well together and value and recognise each others experiences and strengths. This enriches the opportunities for children and provides them with sensitive caring adults to relate to. High regard for the well-being of the children, their group sizes, adult support and well planned activities, contribute to children's well-being, enjoyment and achievements. A robust system is in place regarding the employment of staff and induction training takes place for new staff which safeguards the children's welfare. Staff work efficiently together to develop planning which impacts on the experiences for children's play and learning.

Good systems are in place to evaluate and assess their practice. Secure action plans have been developed to highlight areas for improvement and the management team are extremely confident

and accomplished in achieving these positive changes. They help staff play an active role in implementing the recent changes which have raised staffs awareness in many areas of their care and within the educational program. All staff are committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement of their practice. They regularly monitor and improve the quality of their care through these evaluations.

The directors work closely with the manager and deputy. They have overall responsibility to support the manager in her role, to manage the finances and to oversee all records and documentation. Highly efficient organisation of all records and documents ensures children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Children's care is enhanced by the sound quality and standard of organisation. This aids the children as they move through the nursery. The management team continually enhance their knowledge through training and provide a thorough training program for all staff. In-house training takes place alongside external training to ensure staff remain competent and motivated. The management team highly value their staff and the contribution they make to the organisation of the nursery and to the welfare of the children. Staff have increased their knowledge and understanding of the National Standards, the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage. This is evident in the way they are dedicated to the children's care, learning and play. The management team has a clear vision for the nursery and its future development. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure the manager has a Level 3 qualification and experience appropriate to the post, to obtain prior permission from parents before administering medication and to ensure parents sign each entry in the medication record, to ensure staff are able to implement any policies and procedures with regard to child protection issues. The provider also agreed to update their planning to show the learning intention and differentiation for older or more able children, to devise and implement a systematic approach to observations and assessments and to ensure parents views are sought, valued and acted on and that they receive information to help them extend activities at home.

The provider has appointed a suitable qualified and experienced manager. Consent is gained from parents before any medication is administered to a child and all parents are requested to sign the medication record to ensure they have been informed of the medication given to their child. Excellent procedures are in place for the identification of individual children's medication. All staff are now fully aware of the child protection policies and procedures to ensure children and staff remain protected. The nursery has updated their planning to show the learning intentions of the activities and understand how these can be extended for individual children. However, this is not clearly documented on the plans. A systematic approach has been developed with children's observations and assessments which clearly show the progress they make through the stepping stones and early learning goals. A wide range of information is available for parents to gain an insight into the activities taking place and how they can extend these at home. Their views are actively sought with questionnaires, a suggestion box, through discussions and with meetings.

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 children's independence skills can be further extended. For example, at mealtimes and when finding their coats before playing in the outside area.

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):

- provide opportunities for children to develop their understanding of information technology with regard to regular use of the computer equipment
- develop planning to ensure the opportunities to provide further challenge for older and more able children are documented and to include key questions and vocabulary.

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