

Gilah Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130521
Inspection date	28 November 2007
Inspector	Tina Kelly
Setting Address	The Synagogue, Croxdale Road, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, WD6 4QA
Telephone number	020 8386 3233
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Registered person	Susan Gray
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?

Gilah Nursery School has been in operation since 1980. They have sole use of five rooms within two buildings of the Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue. The New Building is used for children aged three years and under and the Gilah Building is used for the older children.

The New Building provides five morning sessions from 09:00 until 12:00 with additional sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 13:00 until 15:30. The Gilah Building is open five mornings from 09:15 until 12:15 during term time with additional lunch club and afternoon sessions on Tuesday and Thursdays until 14:15. The nursery is part of the Flexible Pathfinder Scheme.

There are currently 100 children on roll aged between two and four years. This includes 18 funded three year olds; there were no funded four year olds. The nursery supports children with special needs and with English as a second language.

The Head of Nursery coordinates a team of 27 staff. The deputy is one of three senior co-ordinators working with the children. A total of twelve staff have early years qualifications at level two or above and two assistants are working towards early years qualifications.

This Orthodox Jewish nursery is managed by a governing committee of parents, nursery staff, the Rabbi and members of the Shul. The nursery's daily routine includes traditions and customs which are carried out in Hebrew language.

The nursery is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA) and is in the process of working towards the PSLA Accreditation Scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about the importance of good health and hygiene through their daily routines. They are encouraged to be independent as they are fully supported in their personal care when they access the cloakroom. They are familiar with the process and are confident in using the toilets and washing hands. Satisfactory nappy changing facilities are available, children have privacy and their personal needs are well met. Policies and procedures, which support the health and medical needs of all children are in place and personal information is updated on a regular basis.

Children's nutritional and cultural dietary needs are well met. Children sit together at snack time, sharing the fruit that is provided by parents. Their social skills are developed as they serve, talk about the different fruits, learn to cut the various textures and shapes and then assist in clearing away. Prayers and traditional songs are introduced at this important time in the children's routine. Children are beginning to recognise the importance of cultural foodstuffs and festivals as these are introduced in a fun and interesting manner throughout the week and year. Staff have a good understanding of food hygiene as they follow guidance from training attended by senior staff. They use disposable gloves and aprons when dealing with food at snack and lunch time. Food provided by the nursery is produced under the Rabbinical Supervision and listed in the United Synagogue Kashrut Guide or purchased from a supervised bakery. Children frequently visit the nearby delicatessen and bakery to extend their understanding of where food is bought in their community. Their individual needs and dietary restrictions are recorded and taken into account at lunchtimes when the nursery provides food for the children.

Children are protected as appropriate numbers of staff hold first aid qualifications. There is also a rolling programme to keep these skills up to date. This ensures children receive appropriate treatment in the event of an accident. Staff are fully aware of the systems that are in place to record accidents and the administration of medication.

The children are encouraged to develop their understanding and awareness of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy regular opportunities to develop their physical skills in the nursery's adventure play areas. One is suitable for children under the age of three years and the other provides apparatus that challenges the older children's abilities. Children's progression and growing confidence in their physical skills is not fully recorded on their individual achievement records. Activities are not planned to promote and extend these developing skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure, well maintained, welcoming and child friendly environment. The ground floor of the New Building used for the children under three year olds provides two

comfortable rooms for children to play. There is an adjoining room for messy play. The spacious room upstairs provides a busy but well organised environment for children aged three years. The older children use two rooms in the Gilah Building. They have access to the large hall which is mainly used by the slightly younger children and provides space for imaginative play, a selection of table top activities and a well resourced book corner. The older children's home room provides a stimulating learning environment. All areas provide children with appropriate and good quality resources that are generally accessible as most are stored at low-level.

Outside play is scheduled into the routines of all age groups. Children also have use of the large car park to play team and ball games. This area is monitored by the site security to ensure now vehicles have access to the areas where the children play. Children are well supported and encouraged by staff who monitor their safety as they climb, jump and explore the wooden structures. However, at time all of the three year old children access the secure adventure play area. This means that children are not able to run and to take part in robust play in a safe manner. Children of different abilities are not able to take best advantage of the play items as the area is crowded and does not offer a good play experience.

Children's safety is maintained as the site is secure and monitored by members of the synagogue. A short wave radio is used to contact the nursery for admittance. Emergency evacuation procedures and drills are maintained on a regular basis. Children learn about keeping themselves safe through their daily routines. Staff remind the children not to run, to be aware of the space around them and the impact their play has on others. When out in the community they learn about road safety whilst walking to the local shops. Parents are fully informed about all aspects of travel and arrangements for outings. Relevant permission documents are in place.

Children are protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection issues. The child protection co-ordinator is a member of the board of governors who has relevant knowledge of how to ensure the correct procedures are maintained and followed. Information for staff and parents from the Local Safeguarding Children Board is readily available.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled within the nursery setting. They are motivated and quickly become engrossed in a broad range of activities relevant to their ages and stages of development. The well resourced play rooms that are set up for the younger children provide opportunities for them to develop their play and social skills in a caring environment.

Staff working with the younger children plan activities to meet the children's needs. They base the activities on the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework. This ensures appropriated resources are readily available to the younger children. Appropriate records are in place to monitor their achievements and to build on their developing skills. Children enjoy enthusiastic singing sessions. Staff are fully involved in expressive action rhymes which reflect cultural customs and festivals. Children watch and gradually join in with a growing confidence in a small and secure group setting. Children receive appropriate praise and encouragement, they are polite and co-operative.

Nursery Education. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are experienced in supporting children's learning. The planning is effective and based on the curriculum guidance in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Long term, yearly plans are based on the Jewish cultural calendar, all aspects of the early learning goals are built into the varied themes and topics. The plans are well structured and identify resources and staff deployment. However, the evaluation

of activities is not always completed in full; staff are therefore not always able to build on the children's experiences gained in the activity. Staff are good role models, they work with the children at all times to extend their language and comprehension so that they develop confidence and are able to adapt to new experiences. Staff use stimulating and varied teaching methods, they have a good understanding of how children learn. Children have a positive attitude to all the activities and opportunities that are offered to them. They are keen to try new skills, they enjoy sharing their experiences with others as they chat and explain what they are doing with their peers, to staff and visitors.

Planning for cultural topics such as Noah's Ark includes all aspects of the early learning goals. Children discuss the weather and the impact it has on their lives. Mathematical concepts are extended with the ever increasing numbers and variety of animals. They discuss the size of their shapes and understand which is biggest and smallest. The art work develops the children's understanding of the different animals, their patterns, colours and sizes. Their finer manipulative skills are used to paint, cut and glue the shapes to build the bigger picture to display on the wall. This joint project is understood by the children who can identify the particular animals they had been involved in making. Children learn to co-operate, put their work together to make a bright and interesting display for everyone to see.

Children are developing good listening skills. Staff have good story telling skill and bring interest and excitement to familiar stories and characters. Children show great delight and join in repetitive lines from favourite stories such as 'The Gruffalo'. Children are confident in choosing and handling books which are readily available. Children have a growing confidence in recognising letters that are linked to their names and relevant objects. They are fully supported with a phonics system of letter and sound recognition; this is reinforced through a self-registration system and establishes a sound basis for early reading skills. Children have access to mark making activities on a regular basis as they are planned into the daily routines. They are learning the importance of writing in everyday experiences as they are able to use paper and pencils in their free play.

Children have a growing understanding of the use of mathematical language and concepts. Staff ask appropriate questions such as 'how many do you need and can you count?' during both planned and general discussion throughout the session. A laptop computer is used with individuals and small groups. One member of staff has developed an interesting and relevant collection of educational discs. An index has been developed to link the various discs to letters, shapes, colours and mathematical themes that are planned into the curriculum. Children have opportunities to use the technology to reinforce everyday learning experiences. They also use the 'Paintbox' programme which enables them to draw freehand with different colours which refines their mouse skills and shows that technology does not have to be limited to the set instructions on the programmed discs.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery, they thrive in a well supported and challenging environment. Children's self-esteem and independence is boosted through the classroom helper system. They are making good progress in all areas of learning and personal development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop strong relationships with their carers and teachers. Their individual needs are well met as staff ensure all children are treated with respect and their family backgrounds are valued. The older children have a growing sense of belonging as they find their names as they

come into nursery. Younger children are welcomed into their home rooms by staff who know them well. Staff are consistent in their approach to behaviour management. They use appropriate strategies to help children learn right from wrong. The children are well behaved, happy and settled in their environment. They are confident and are encouraged to use their initiative and make decisions for themselves about their play. Children receive praise and good support from staff who are good role models, this promotes good behaviour in all aspects of play and learning.

Children develop a positive attitude to others and a good understanding about the wider world and their community. When families move abroad children learn about the country through observing different countries on a large wall mounted map. Their understanding is supported with pictures, post cards and discussion. They learn about their own faith and different aspects of the wider world through well planned activities, cultural traditions and festivals.

The nursery has strategies in place to identify and support children with learning difficulties. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) liaises with the nursery head and other support services to ensure children's individual needs are recognised and met in full. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being fostered.

A strong partnership has developed with parents, this contributes significantly to the children's well-being in the nursery. A weekly newsletter keeps them informed about themes and diary dates. When children start at the nursery their family completes the 'All about me' form so staff can ensure children are comforted and able to settle in well. Parents speak highly of the nursery and the staff. They fully appreciate the commitment and care taken to ensure the children's needs are identified and appropriate support is given to the children in all aspects of their care and learning. Parents have opportunities to speak to their children's key worker on a daily basis or they can make an appointment to talk to the head. Questionnaires are used to monitor parent opinion of the nursery. The information that is gathered is always followed up with a letter outlining important aspects of the review and actions that are to be taken to continue to develop and enhance the nursery provision.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents are kept informed about the curriculum and early learning goals that are the basis for the children's learning. Plans of activities, themes and topics are displayed around the nursery and pre-school rooms outlining the day to day opportunities that are provided for the children. There is a comprehensive breakdown of the nursery curriculum and how parents can support their children's early learning experience outlined in the nursery handbook.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Knowledgeable staff understand and follow the policies and procedure which are set out in the staff handbook. These documents support the staff in promoting children's well being, care and learning. Appropriate recruitment procedures are in place which ensures all adults working with the children are suitable to do so. There is a consistently high staff ratio in all areas of the nursery. The highly qualified staff team are well deployed which ensure all children receive appropriate support at all times. Staff work well together, they each take responsibility for particular activities and aspects of the children's learning. They are guided by a strong management team which ensures everyone is working to promote and support children's welfare and learning. A flexible routine provides a good balance between planned, adult led activities and free play. Children have access to a variety of rooms and play opportunities throughout the day and the week's activities.

All required documents and records are in place, these are reviewed on a regular basis. The parents' handbook provides information on the nursery curriculum and care provided. The inspection report is available on the notice board alongside copies of the policies and procedures. The nursery has developed a very comprehensive and easy to access web page to inform parents of the aims and services offered.

The leadership and management of early education is good. The head of the nursery provides consistent support for staff working towards early years qualifications. A comprehensive induction and regular supervision promotes the professional development of all staff. The members of staff responsible for the nursery education work well together in planning and implementing a varied and stimulating curriculum. Records of children's achievements are based on information from parents as the children come into the nursery. The child profile forms and observations are well presented and provide a good overall view of the children's progress. The curriculum and methods of evaluating the children's progress are consistently reviewed, they identify strengths and areas for improvement. However information about the government funding for nursery education and the registration with Ofsted is not included. Parents are not fully informed about this aspect of the provision. The entire staff team has a strong commitment to training, they provide an inclusive environment where every child matters. Overall the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

The nursery had four recommendations from previous visits; to ensure staff records show training attended, dates and plans for meeting future training needs; the outside play area to be managed and activities planned to ensure all areas of the children's physical skills are developed to their full potential; widen the staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues with regard to a large staff team and nursery setting and to ensure there are regular opportunities provided for parents to receive information regarding their child's development.

The nursery has developed the recording system of staff training to ensure future training needs are identified and met. This includes child protection to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded at all times. Children's development is consistently monitored and strategies are in place to share this information with parents to enable them to support their children's learning. Children have opportunities to extend their physical play as outside play is planned into the daily routines.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that require 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 complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review timetable for the outside adventure play area to ensure children have space to play and age appropriate activities
- ensure parents are fully informed about the government funding for early years education and the registration with Ofsted.

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):

- ensure the evaluation of activities are completed appropriately to inform future planning and identify children's individual needs, particularly with regards to physical development.

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