

Harlequin Childcare

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY275444
Inspection date	16 October 2007
Inspector	Caroline Wright
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Registered person	Harlequin Childcare
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?

Harlequin Childcare is run by a private company. It opened in 2004 and operates from The Old School House in Ely, Cambridgeshire. A maximum of 58 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:30 for 51 weeks of the year with the exception of public holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 93 children aged from seven months to under five years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs 19 members of staff to work with the children: 17 of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications; four members of staff are working towards further early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children show an excellent understanding of the importance of good personal hygiene, which they learn through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating and sensitive reminders from their key workers when necessary. They confidently declare that washing your hands 'gets rid of germs'. Staff act as excellent role models, wiping down surfaces before serving food and implementing a 'no shoes' policy indoors, to help children to stay healthy. Highly effective procedures, such as wiping down mats between nappy changes and thorough cleaning of bathrooms and kitchens, are carried out diligently by staff each day. The daily checks performed by the manager ensure that all areas of the nursery are scrupulously clean.

Children successfully learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. They are able to run around and exert themselves outdoors in the garden regardless of the weather, so that they learn the importance of regular fresh air and exercise. They develop new physical skills such as riding bicycles or climbing on the climbing frame and independently access a superb range of small tools and equipment. As a result, they acquire new manipulative skills as they play. The nursery have clearly detailed plans in place to enable them to continue to improve the provision for outdoor play in the future: children will be able to grow their own vegetables to eat with their meals which will further enhance existing experiences of handling fruit and vegetables. Children flow freely between the indoor and outdoor area at lunch time so that they can develop new skills in an environment that suits their personal learning style.

Children's nutritional needs are extremely well met. The nursery cook plans a varied and well-balanced range of meals for children. Food is freshly prepared each day and takes account of children's allergies and special diets. Staff working with babies meticulously follow individual weaning programmes and feed children according to their own routines. Children are given fresh fruit and other healthy options for their snack, with regular drinks of water or milk to help them to remain well hydrated so that they can think effectively. In addition, children learn about healthy eating in meaningful ways. They share stories about food; prepare fresh fruit smoothies for snack time or vegetable soup for tea. They handle all types of fruit and vegetables in play situations. As a result, they talk with understanding about 'healthy food' that 'makes you grow big', recognising and enjoying eating a wide range of vegetables with their meals.

The needs of children under three-years-old are particularly well met by adults who have a very good understanding of their developmental needs. Babies have a sleep in a cot when they need it and toddlers can rest on comfortable snooze mats after lunch if they want to. Excellent hygiene procedures, specifically planned to take account of the vulnerability of the younger children, promote their ongoing good health effectively. A very good range of large and small equipment inside and out enables babies and toddlers to develop new physical skills according to their stage of development. For example, babies explore the carefully selected items that staff provide in the 'treasure baskets' and enjoy looking at their reflection in mirrors, which are positioned so that they see different viewpoints. They examine and experiment with familiar items such as hats and bags in role play; they investigate the taste and texture of toys with their tongue and mouth, developing co-ordination and manipulative dexterity.

If the children become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of the nursery, excellent records are in place to make sure that very good care is given. An ongoing programme

for first aid training ensures that all staff are aware of how to provide appropriate care in the event of an emergency.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children move around in complete safety under the constant supervision of the nursery staff. All children actively learn how to keep themselves safe through staff's gentle reminders and sensitive style of teaching; they patiently wait for their turn to come down the slide so that they do not bump into each other and remind each other not to push 'because you might make me fall over'. They devise 'rules' for playing in the sand, agreeing that, 'If we jump out of the sandpit we might bump our head'. Stairgates prevent children from accessing areas that are not safe, without adult supervision. A coded entry lock prevents members of the public from entering the premises without being invited to make certain that the nursery remains secure.

In addition, children effectively learn about staying safe outside the setting through valuable activities. They hold hands with their key worker if they go for a walk and talk with understanding about the importance of 'waiting for the green man before you cross the road'. Staff take advantage of every opportunity to help children to learn about how to deal with emergency situations. For example, if they see a fire engine whilst they are out walking or playing in the garden they use this opportunity to talk to children about how to 'dial 999' or how to keep themselves safe in the event of a fire. These discussions are skilfully extended by staff who follow up with interesting activities such as, 'emergency' role play and small world play scenarios, for children to consolidate their learning through imaginary situations. The management team have detailed plans in place to develop this area of practice further in the future. A programme of training has been prepared to help key workers to focus on new ways to teach children about personal safety and to fully integrate these activities in the curriculum plans.

Children use a superb range of interesting and attractive resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development, and these are checked and thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis by the nursery staff to ensure they are in good condition and are safe.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who have a very good understanding of child protection procedures, which are in line with those set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All staff receive child protection training during their induction at the nursery so that they are able to act in children's best interests. They record any existing injuries or concerns that they have for children's welfare and they are confident to seek advice from child protection professionals if they need to.

An effective risk assessment of the premises is carried out in each room and the garden each day and effectively addresses any potential hazard to children's safety. In addition, analysis of accident and incident records to highlight areas of risk, together with the manager's ongoing checks are highly successful in maintaining children's overall safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's experiences are enhanced by the skilful interaction of staff who enjoy working with them and use their sound understanding of child development to support children's learning. The needs of children under three-years-old are well met by key workers who are experienced in caring for young children and have a clear knowledge of how to meet their developmental

needs well. The team effectively use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan future activities and assess the progress of children under three-years-old.

Children are very happy, confident and enjoy their time at the setting. They engage in the extremely wide range of interesting and purposeful activities that are provided by their key workers throughout the day. For example, they practise early writing skills and experiment with mark making when they make tracks in dry flour with their fingers or with a variety of paint brushes. They explore their senses and learn about texture when they play with jelly or ice with pretend spiders suspended in the substance. An extensive range of large and small equipment enables young children to develop new physical skills according to their stage of development. For example, babies explore dynamics and rotation when operating musical 'cause and effect' toys on the floor under the sensitive observation of key workers. Strategically positioned mirrors enable them to learn about patterns and shape, while 'treasure baskets', with interesting items such as corn cobs or fir cones, promote their natural curiosity as learners. Toddlers freely investigate everyday technology such as telephones in their play to develop their communication skills and improve their manipulative dexterity. Babies are able to take a rest in their cot when they want to so that they are not too tired to enjoy their play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning are good. Children enjoy planned activities that enable them to paint with their fingers or mix paints to paint leaves in the Autumn. They use number names in their play, talking about 'these two cars are waiting in the car park' and they count groups of items reliably such as how many boys and girls are present at circle time. They communicate very effectively and use a wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas and talk about what they know. They talk about aeroplanes landing 'on a run-a-way so that they don't crash into cars on the road'. They explore textures and talk about how they feel when they squash 'boingy boingy strawberries' or play with the 'soft and prickly' straw that staff provide. Children talk with understanding about what they do at home and discuss their families and home cultures at circle time. They discuss where they go on holidays and know that 'you go on the aeroplane because the car can't drive in the sea'. Children learn about the natural environment when they play outdoors in all weathers and they discuss the weather and changing seasons with understanding each day at circle time. They enjoy making sequences and creating patterns, which helps them to learn about early mathematics and patterns in words, when they thread leaves and conkers onto string, developing new physical skills using the cork screw and hole-punch under their key workers' expert supervision.

Children look at books alone and with adults; they turn pages from front to back carefully and listen with interest to stories. Children enjoy singing songs at circle time, moving their bodies to the rhythm and joining in with finger rhymes. They make up their own stories and use language to explore their imagination. For example, they talk about how they would like to 'make an undersea car. It would be funny and fast so you wouldn't drown under the sea'. However, children do not always have suitable resources available to enable them to extend their learning in role play situations. In addition, children are not always able to access the resources they will need to explore their creativity independently through art and craft activities. This impacts upon children's ability to experiment with media and materials and limits learning.

All of the staff working with children have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and know how the activities they provide contribute to children's progress. They understand how children learn through practical experiences and they plan meaningful activities, such as 'gloop' or mixing powder-paint with water, that capture children's

interests and encourage them to explore. Key workers monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals well and use the stepping stones effectively to track development. They use their observations of children at play to help them to plan future activities that are based on children's interests.

However, some activities lack challenge for older or more able children: for example, adults write children's name on artwork, set the table for meals and serve children's snack. Children spend extended periods of time waiting for their snack to be served without purposeful occupation. They become bored and this impacts upon their behaviour. In addition, staff do not always provide appropriate resources, such as pencils, books or paper; or telephones, money and cash registers to enable children to read and write for a purpose or to use numbers and calculations in the role play café or shop. They do not always provide sufficient resources for children to independently explore their imagination and creativity through art and craft activities. This affects learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children show high levels of self-esteem and work harmoniously to solve problems and initiate activities. They carry boxes of toys together at tidy up time if they are 'too heavy' and they help each other to find the paper that they want to use from the cupboard. They play together in large or small groups and eagerly join in adult-led activities such as circle time or story time. The staff sensitively help children to respect each other's needs and to share resources, for example encouraging them to take turns to use the food processor to make a fruit smoothie for their snack. Staff show respect for children's wishes and take their suggestions seriously, so that they feel valued and secure. They encourage children to make up 'rules' for playing together, including rules for playing in the sand which they display as reminders if they are needed. If a child should forget to respect the needs of another, staff take time to carefully explain what they expect in a way that the child can understand. Carefully planned activities, such as the welcome song at circle time and birthday celebrations where children invite their family and siblings to join them for tea, enable children to feel a strong sense of belonging and help them to feel a part of the nursery community.

Children make decisions about what they want to do for the majority of the time, choosing resources and moving around activities freely. Children generally behave well and understand what is expected of them. However, some group activities do not meet the needs of children. For example, they wait for a long period of time without purposeful engagement for snack time to begin and become bored whilst they wait. Younger children also have to wait again when they have finished their snack: they wait for everyone to have their nappies changed and put on their coats, with only books to entertain them, before they can go outside to play. They become unsettled and are uninterested in the books. This affects learning and impacts upon their behaviour.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They have opportunities to learn about the world they live in and all members of society. They play with small world figures, look at books and take part in a wide range of cultural and religious celebrations. They talk about what they do at home so that they learn about each other's family culture. This helps children to learn positive attitudes towards diversity through first hand experiences and discussions.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. It contributes to the progress and well-being of all children. Children benefit from the positive relationships between their parents and key workers. A highly effective 'home visit' is valued by parents: the manager of the setting uses this opportunity to gather detailed information about children's individual needs and their specific likes and dislikes. Key workers then use this information to help children to settle into the nursery so that they become confident members of the group. Parents of children with English as an additional language share 'key words' with staff to help their children to build on their existing language and become confident communicators. Key workers work well with parents and other professionals to offer good support to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to join in with the full range of activities. Parents and carers receive clear information about the nursery and activities children take part in through various media. For example, emails, regular newsletters, a comprehensive website, open days and notice-board displays. Daily discussions with key workers help parents to know about their children's progress; a daily observation record and communication books for each child help parents to know what their children do on a daily basis. However, the nursery have not yet established a formal system to include parents' ongoing observations, of what their children achieve at home, in children's development records. This affects their ability to plan activities that build on everything that children already know. As a result, some activities lack challenge for children. This affects learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All areas of the nursery environment are very well organised, highly attractive and stimulating and provide plenty of space for children to move around safely and independently. Children and their families are warmly welcomed personally into the setting each day by a member of staff who greets them with smiles and encouraging comments. As a result, children enter the nursery confidently and leave their parents easily. The registered provider uses successful recruitment procedures, which ensure that the staff are well experienced and hold the necessary qualifications to carry out their role effectively. All staff are rigorously vetted to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The excellent induction procedure and comprehensive operational plan, with up to date information for staff, makes sure that all members of the team are secure in their knowledge of procedures for child protection and maintaining children's overall welfare. The ongoing professional development of staff in the nursery is considered to be a high priority by the whole of the staff team. All individuals engage in regular training courses which are well planned to meet their individual development needs and cover a wide variety of early years subjects. As a result, all staff have a deep understanding of how children learn and are up to date with current agreed 'best practice'. The nursery staff are well supported by regular one-to-one meetings with their line manager and a superb system of ongoing appraisal, which links to the in-depth training plan, makes sure that areas for development are identified. The highly committed management team are proactive in accessing research documents and other materials to help them to identify areas for further improvements for the setting so that they continue to develop the way they care for children. However, the organisation of some large group activities such as snack time, do not promote children's decision making and impact upon children's behaviour.

All of the legally required documents, which contribute to children's health, safety and well-being, including a procedure to record complaints or concerns, are in place and regularly reviewed.

Leadership and management of early education is good. Regular team meetings enable staff to work effectively as a team. Ongoing training and development is identified by a very good system of supervision and appraisal for all members of the team. A highly effective self evaluation process enables all staff to examine their own practice, identify areas for further development and to contribute to the nursery's vision for the future. However, some activities lack challenge; opportunities for children to extend their creativity and to develop their learning through role play are missed and parents' observations of what children achieve at home are not used to influence planning of activities. This impacts upon children's learning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery agreed to continue to further extend staff's knowledge and practice by accessing external training to further enhance the ethos of the group. Since the last inspection the nursery have continued to develop the induction and appraisal systems. These systems are now very thorough and are highly successful in identifying areas for individual staff development and developing practice throughout the nursery. A clear training plan is in place to ensure that staff receive regular training in essential areas, such as first aid and safeguarding children, as well as promoting personal development for staff at all levels. As a result, all members of the team have a deep understanding of how children learn and are committed to ongoing self improvement.

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 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):

- develop the organisation of large group activities, such as snack time to promote positive behaviour and decision making: make sure children do not spend extended periods of time without being purposefully engaged and that all children are adequately challenged at all times (this also applies to nursery education).

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

- set up a formal system to encourage parents to add their observations of what children achieve at home to children's development records; use these observations to inform the planning of activities that build on all of children's existing knowledge and skills to make sure that children are adequately challenged in activities at all times (this also applies to care)
- improve the programme for creativity to promote learning across all areas of the Foundation Stage: make sure that resources and equipment are always available to enable children to extend their learning through the provision for role play; make sure that they are always able to easily access a wide range of resources to explore their creativity in art and craft independently.

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