

Dolly Mixtures

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY286528
Inspection date	19 October 2007
Inspector	Julie Whitelaw
Setting Address	Great Ashby Community Centre, Whitehorse Lane, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 6NH
Telephone number	07759756497
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Registered person	Dolly Mixtures Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Dolly Mixtures pre-school opened in 2004 and operates from a large room in Great Ashby Community Centre. The premises are situated in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 20 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school is open five mornings a week from 09:00 until 12:00, during the school term.

There are currently 28 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 16 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from the local area.

The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs four members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and well-maintained environment. They learn the importance of hygiene through the daily routine and are supported by staff to develop independence in their personal care and care of the environment. For example, when a child spills a cup of milk they use paper towels to clean it up and then dispose of them in the bin, understanding the need to keep their environment clean. Children's good health is promoted well through positive steps incorporated into the daily routine to prevent the spread of infection. Staff wear disposable gloves when nappy changing and surfaces are cleaned with antibacterial wipes. Children's health is promoted through effective policies and procedures that are followed if children are sick.

Children enjoy nutritious snacks such as carrots and breadsticks. They go with the staff to buy food from the local supermarket and through discussion begin to understand what foods are good for them. Topic work and activities such as food tasting, extend children's understanding of healthy eating. Water is available for children to independently access, which ensures they stay hydrated.

Children enjoy a range of activities that contribute to their good health both indoors and in the outside play area. Their physical skills are promoted as they crawl through tunnels into tents, play games with the parachute and move with purpose to music.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a safe and secure indoor environment. Staff visually check the premises each morning and complete a daily check list to ensure potential hazards have been addressed. For example, electric sockets are made safe through the use of covers. Staff are vigilant regarding the security of the indoor environment and children are unable to leave unsupervised. However, the perimeter fence of the outside play is not secure and unwanted visitors may be able to enter this area. This potentially compromises children's safety.

Children's safety is promoted because effective procedures are in place to clean and check toys for damage. Children develop an understanding of how to stay safe as the fire drill is regularly practised. Therefore they know what they should do if they need to evacuate the building in an emergency. On outings to the local shops, children learn about road safety. Through the clear explanations staff give, including the consequences of their actions, children develop an understanding of how to stay safe. They demonstrate an awareness of safety as they carefully move chairs around the room, with the legs pointing down so as not to hurt anyone.

Children are protected as staff have an adequate understanding of child protection and what action they should take if they have concerns regarding the welfare of a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children happily separate from their carers, settle quickly and engage in a chosen activity. They confidently move around the environment and interact with their peers and staff. Children use their imagination well as they, for example, pretend to iron clothes in the home corner and

when they make collages with a selection of materials. Staff plan a range of enjoyable, worthwhile activities that children are keen to participate in. Children's personal, social and emotional development is given high priority to ensure they feel confident and secure and enjoy their time at the setting.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and child development. Detailed short term planning is in place that covers the six areas of learning and is related to the stepping stones. Challenges set for children are appropriate. This ensures that children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals. Staff know the children well through the effective key worker system. They regularly observe and assess children to track the progress they make. However, planning is not informed by assessment or shared with parents. This potentially limits the rate children make progress. Appropriate methods are used to teach children. Staff are skilled at asking questions that encourage children to think and express their feelings, For example, when tasting fruit, children say what it tastes of and if they like it. The daily routine and use of resources are satisfactory and ensure children are occupied and engaged. However, the planning of the environment is limited. Therefore, it does not always hold children's attention or provide sufficient challenge.

Children settle well on arrival and interact confidently with their peers and the staff. They are encouraged to develop independence in their personal care. Self-care skills are promoted well as children put on their coats and shoes. Children learn to be independent as they select their snack and pour their own drinks. Most children confidently interact and talk with others. They show an interest in books and listen attentively when read a story. There are few examples of the written word in the environment. Children develop confidence as they appropriately respond when asked a question. For example, children recall when they went to the doctors and received a sticker as they did not cry. Staff manage children well and encourage them to develop self-control.

Snack time is utilised well to promote mathematical skills. Children count plates and cups and develop an understanding of addition and subtraction through practical activities. As children play with stickle bricks they learn the names of different shapes and create simple patterns. Children show wonder as they observe insects in the outside play area. Staff set out different materials for children to explore, such as pasta. However, these are only changed every half term and do not hold children's interest. Children build and construct with a range of objects. Resources are available that promote children's understanding of technology. Children explain how the toy microwave does not work because there are no batteries in it. The concept of time is promoted well as children complete the date and weather chart each day and therefore have opportunities to consolidate their knowledge. Through topic work, children learn about past events and different cultures and beliefs.

Children have opportunities to be creative through craft activities. They are able to access a range of materials and use their imagination in art, design and role play. Children enjoy singing songs and know how to do so quietly and loudly when asked. They move creatively to music and dance with ribbons. As children explore play dough they have the opportunity to use a range of tools. Children are learning to use scissors with increasing control.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are valued and treated as individuals. The effective settling-in procedure ensures that children happily separate from their carers. They develop a sense of belonging as they see

their work displayed and their names plates at snack time. Children begin to appreciate the customs and cultures of others as they celebrate festival throughout the year. Stories and craft activities extend their learning.

Children behave well and respond positively to the clear consistent boundaries staff set. They manage children in a calm manner and explain to them the consequences of their actions, which promotes positive behaviour. Staff focus on rewarding positive behaviour through praise, encouragement and reward systems. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are welcomed into the setting. Staff have completed training and are aware that they may need to obtain additional resources or adapt activities to enable each child to reach their potential. Staff also liaise effectively with other agencies to obtain advice and support. They work in partnership with parents to ensure children's needs are met.

Parents receive a prospectus that details the setting policies and procedures. They reported that they were happy with the care children receive and felt that the environment was clean, safe and that staff were approachable. At the end of the session, staff inform parents verbally how children have been throughout the morning and any particular achievements. Staff are developing photo albums to show parents the activities children participate in and what they are learning.

The partnership with parents of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their child through discussion and a home information sheet. They are invited into the setting to be involved in their learning. Newsletter also advise parents how they can continue their child's learning at home. However, parents are not fully informed about the provision of early education and there is no system in place to share children's achievements and the progress they are making towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a team of staff who all hold an early years qualification and have a sound understanding of child development. Effective vetting procedures are in place which promote children's safety and well-being. Informal team meetings take place at the end of each session, when all aspects of the provision are discussed. Staff are willing to develop their skills through further training and are keen to make improvements and develop their practice. Plans for the future include, improving the outside play area to ensure it can be used in all weathers. The required documentation is in place and is well organised to promote the welfare, care and learning of the children who attend.

The leadership and management for children in receipt of funding for nursery education is satisfactory. Management are good role models and motivate staff. They build committed teams by involving them in all aspects of the setting and value their contribution. Management promote the professional development of staff through appraisals, during which strengths and weaknesses are identified. Training is then arranged to improve staff's knowledge. Staff place importance on providing an inclusive environment in which every child matters. They are committed to the improvement of care and education for all children. However, systems to

monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education are limited. Therefore, areas for improvement are not effectively identified and addressed. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the setting were asked to ensure that a system was in place for registering children and staff attendance on a daily basis, showing times of arrival and departure. This is now in place and promotes children's well-being.

It was also recommended that there was sufficient and suitable equipment and resources that children can independently access. Children can now access an adequate range of resources that are clearly labelled in two storage units. This promotes independence and free choice in their play.

They were also asked to review procedures for hygiene to ensure equipment is clean at all times. Children now use wipes or paper towels if they need to clean their hands. This ensures that the equipment remains clean, which promotes children's health.

It was recommended that relevant up to date child protection literature is obtained and understood by all staff members. This is now in place and staff have an adequate understanding of how to protect children.

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.

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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):

- improve the risk assessment of the setting, to ensure that all hazards are identified and addressed. This refers to the security of the perimeter fence in the garden.

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 planning is informed by assessment
- develop the partnership with parents to ensure that they receive good quality information about the setting and its provision. Ensure that they are well informed about their child's achievements and the progress they make towards the early learning goals
- develop systems to monitor and evaluate the provision of early education.

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