

New River Green Childrens Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	131721
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Inspector	Carol Johnson
Setting Address	New River Green Childrens Centre, 23 Ramsey Walk, London, N1 2SX
Telephone number	0207 527 4817
E-mail	anita.mohindra@islington.gov.uk
Registered person	London Borough of Islington
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

New River Green Children's Centre is one of the nurseries directly managed by Islington Borough Council and is an inclusive centre offering care and education for children aged six months to five years. It opened in 1991 and operates from a purpose built single storey building.

A maximum of 75 children may attend the centre at any one time. The centre is open 49 weeks a year, from 07.45 to 17.45, to suit working or studying parents. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Children have access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 70 children aged from six months to under five years on roll. Of these, 45 receive funding for early education. The centre also offers a range of support services for children and families, including stay and play sessions, toy libraries, training opportunities, advice sessions, a speech and language therapist, baby clinics and a support group for young parents. The setting currently supports children with English as an additional language and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

20 members of staff work directly with the children. All staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally clean and tidy environment. Toys and equipment are well maintained and cleaned on a regular basis. Children that still require a sleep have individual and regularly laundered bedding. However, children's health is at potential risk as systems to ensure the cleanliness and tidiness of the setting are not sufficiently effective. Management have recognised that this is a problem and the staff team as a whole have discussed ways of making improvements. For example, the setting is looking to recruit a facilities manager and staff check toilet areas throughout the day and remind children to flush toilets and put paper towels in the bin. Older children are developing their independence as they are encouraged to be independent with regards to their personal care. They know why they need to wash their hands and the setting provides liquid soap and paper towels. Pictorial reminders in toilet areas provide visual reminders for children about hygiene procedures.

Children benefit, in the event of illness or a medical emergency, from a clear written sickness policy that ensures parents are aware of the setting's health procedures. Parents are informed of the provision's procedures for administering medication and know not to send children who are clearly unwell and pose a potential health risk to others. Suitably-stocked first aid supplies are accessible and all staff have attended appropriate training with regards to first aid procedures. However, accident records contain insufficient information and staff do not consistently ensure that parents sign the record. Consequently, children's welfare is compromised.

Children's dietary needs are met because they are offered a wide range of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks. Meal times are well organised to promote safety and staff sit with children and actively encourage social skills and table manners. Children are effectively protected from the risks associated with special dietary needs and food allergies because all staff are aware of individual requirements and relevant information is recorded and respected. Children are not at risk from dehydration as drinks are freely available.

Children benefit from lots of physical play and exercise that helps to develop their muscles, co-ordination and confidence. There is plenty of outdoor space for children to run about, enjoy fresh air and generally let off steam and older children are able to move freely between the inside and outdoor environment. Resources to support children's physical play are plentiful and easily accessible. For example, children have access to climbing equipment of various sizes and a variety of balls and wheeled toys. There are areas for children to dig in the soil and water and sand play are easily accessible. Indoors, children have opportunities to use equipment and resources that encourage the development of all their muscles and they regularly take part in music and movement activities.

Younger children are able to rest and be active according to their individual needs. They have access to resources that encourage them to crawl, sit, pull themselves up and walk. Staff encourage children's physical development through assessing their needs and offering support and activities that help them to explore their own abilities and the environment that they play in. Staff understand the need to work in partnership with parents to ensure consistency of care and they ask about children's individual needs and preferences and try and fit around home routines wherever possible.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

A variety of precautions are in place to help ensure children's safety. For example, the main entrance is closely monitored by staff and children are prevented from accessing unsafe areas because doors are kept shut and handles are above their reach. Children and all adults in the setting practise emergency evacuation procedures every term and fire safety equipment is in place. Fire exits are marked and kept clear. However, children's safety is at risk because current risk assessment systems do not ensure that all potential risks to children are identified and minimised. For example, outings are not formally risk assessed, the mesh covering the pond has sunk in places and within the outdoor area various items are stored in large bin bags and there is some litter. Children are learning to protect their own safety and that of others as staff talk to them about safety issues and explain the reasons behind some of the rules. For example, they encourage children to think about what would happen should they go on climbing equipment in inappropriate clothing or footwear and they remind them about not throwing sand as it may get in someone's eyes.

Children's welfare with regards to child protection is suitably protected because staff demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the possible symptoms of child abuse and they know what action to take if they have concerns about a child. In-house training for all staff is planned imminently to increase their knowledge and understanding of relevant issues and staff are aware that their first priority is children's safety. Children are not left unsupervised with people who have not been suitably vetted and they are only released into the care of known individuals.

Children benefit from the provision's extremely spacious and welcoming premises. Indoor and outdoor space are laid out well to maximise play opportunities for children. A wide range of developmentally-appropriate resources to support children's play and learning are accessibly stored helping to encourage their independence and freedom of choice. Child-sized tables and chairs enable children to reach activities and learn to use equipment safely and competently. Large low-level sand containers allow children to stand or sit in the sand and explore and experiment with ease. Consequently, children are extremely confident and self-assured to initiate and extend their own play and learning.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children have great fun and really relish their time at the setting. They are happy and progressing well because staff use their excellent knowledge of how children learn and develop to provide an extensive range of stimulating experiences that are related to individual needs and interests. At the centre there is major building work currently taking place. Staff have cleverly used this situation to inspire and inform children and their parents. 'Bob the Builder' was invited in to talk to the children and they went outside to watch the wet cement being poured into the foundations. Children were able to step in the cement with their 'wellies' and experience how this felt and could see the resulting imprints in the dry cement. Photographs displayed near the entrance to the building encourage children to remember and talk about these experiences.

Children are given plenty of freedom to make choices, develop their ideas and to express their creativity in a variety of ways. They are provided with lots of opportunities to explore using all of their senses and all children access a superb range of activities both indoors and outside. Children regularly go on outings and these provide them with a change of environment and

help them to learn about and appreciate the local neighbourhood and wider community. For example, children frequently visit museums, theatres, the library and Highgate Woods.

Comprehensive and thoughtfully stored resources support and extend children's play and learning. These include a wide variety of equipment for use indoors and outside, for example large construction materials, wheeled toys and role play resources. Children are able to independently access a large selection of toys and equipment because they are stored accessibly within their reach. Labels on toy boxes help children to know what is inside and children are confident to ask or gesture for items that they cannot see or reach.

Close and exceptionally caring relationships between children and staff increase children's trust, sense of self and early communication skills. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of individual children and regularly observe them to assess their needs and individual starting points. Children are confident, eager to participate and many are beginning to form strong friendships with others. Staff listen to children and show them, through their positive responses and body language, that their contributions are acknowledged and valued. Examples of children's work are attractively displayed around the nursery and these help to raise children's self-esteem as they proudly show them off to staff, visitors and parents and carers.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are captivated and often inspired by the superb range of experiences available to them. Staff expertly build on what children already know and can do to support and extend their learning. They make the most of both planned and unplanned events to introduce and consolidate children's knowledge and understanding. For example, a large dead bee found by children when clearing up outside, leads to discussions around safety, colour, number and size. Magnifying glasses were introduced and children compared the dead bee to those in pictures within books that they fetched from inside.

Staff describe how they plan as a team and play is regularly and carefully observed to ensure progression. Play is very child-centred and children are consulted when staff plan future topics; they are asked what they would like to learn about and do. They are given the freedom to make choices and solve problems independently. Through discussion staff members demonstrate a first-rate knowledge of what they hope children will gain from planned activities and how they intend to move children on in their next steps in learning. Staff expertly explain how they share observations of the children and evaluations of activities and this information is used to inform future planning and children's assessment records.

Children are aware of the high expectations for their behaviour and demonstrate a clear understanding of the setting's rules. Staff regularly exchange information and make the effort to create a strong trusting relationship with children and their parents. Consequently, a climate is created in which children feel confident to tackle new challenges and take risks. When children start in the provision parents are asked to share what they know about their children so that staff can gain an understanding of children's needs and starting points. Regular two-way communication is then fostered to enable a broader picture of children's individual achievements and interests to be developed.

Children's speaking and listening skills are developing well. They confidently make contributions to small group discussions and happily listen to each other in group situations. Staff gauge children's levels of concentration and communication and thoughtfully split them into small

supportive groups, twice a day, for shared group time. Generally, during these times children listen to a story, share news or take part in literacy activities. Older children are learning to identify some letter sounds and names and staff use a carefully chosen range of strategies to motivate children and ensure that all are engaged and able to participate on a level that's appropriate for them.

Children are extremely imaginative. Their creativity is encouraged throughout the curriculum and resources to support this area are plentiful. Children's imagination is expertly stimulated through a variety of mediums including art, music, dance and role play. The setting has an artist in residence and she inspires and motivates children's creativity through the wealth of ideas she attractively presents to them. They explore with paint, clay, recycled materials and collage materials, whilst at the same time learning to use scissors and tools with care and skill.

Children are free to move independently between the inside and outdoor environment. They are self-assured in their play and confident to try out new experiences. They proficiently balance, climb, hop, skip and demonstrate good ball skills. Staff are at hand to support less confident or able children but do not intervene unnecessarily. Through their observations and discussions staff identify which children need more or less challenge and they expertly motivate children's efforts and achievements through plenty of praise and encouragement.

Children experiment with water and sand and explore the flow of these down and through various tubes and containers. They play co-operatively in a small group, without adult intervention and work out that the water flows down a tube quicker when it is placed at a steeper incline. They investigate pouring the water using different containers and excitedly discover the different sounds that their voices make when they shout down the tubes. Children use numbers in their play and respond enthusiastically to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and daily routines. More able children can count to twenty and beyond and they demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of more and less.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are settled and secure because relationships between staff and their parents are honest, open, trusting and professional. Staff and parents work together closely to help children learn and develop and parental views to help improve practice are actively sought. Parents comment positively on the excellent care and attention that their children receive and the experienced, dedicated and highly-driven staff. Children's well-being is increased because comprehensive information, both written and verbal, is shared to ensure consistency of care. They receive regular newsletters and a wealth of information is available around the setting in the form of posters, displays and leaflets. However, complaints procedures have not been fully updated to reflect changes in regulations and children's welfare is potentially compromised.

Self-esteem is flourishing in an environment where children are warmly welcomed and individuality is recognised and celebrated. Children's work is attractively displayed throughout the setting and this, along with photographs and videos of children taken during play, ensures that some examples of children's learning and achievement are visible to all. Staff understand how children learn at different rates and in different ways and every child is helped to achieve their potential. Staff take time and make the effort to get to know individual children and their families and sensitively assess their varying needs and wishes. An effective key-worker system is in operation and children with English as an additional language are well supported. Staff effectively use their observations of all children, along with discussions with their parents, to

discover the best ways to help them to settle, communicate and achieve. Some staff speak a variety of languages and interpreting and translation services are available to help support children and their families, as required. Resources that reflect diversity and children's home experiences are plentiful and these help children to settle and develop a sense of belonging. For example, children can access a wide range of books, role play equipment, puzzles and small world figures.

The nursery has excellent systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting's admission policy is inclusive ensuring that all children and their families are not discriminated against. This is evident throughout all policies and practice. Staff have attended a wealth of relevant training and plan and monitor activities that build on what children already know and can do. The setting works collaboratively with parents and carers and has excellent links with other professionals, for example health visitors, speech therapists and educational psychologists.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children behave well because they know what is expected of them. Staff expectations are high and children receive clear guidance with regards to rules and boundaries. Staff use a range of positive and developmentally-appropriate methods for managing children's behaviour and these strategies are shared with parents to ensure that a consistent approach is adopted. Staff provide children with good role models and encourage children to explore their own feelings and to be kind and considerate towards others.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is outstanding. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in their children's care and learning and the provision as a whole. They receive regular newsletters and are invited to share, with staff and children, any expertise or knowledge that they may have. For example, as part of 'Black History' celebrations a parent came into the setting and read a story to the children, introduced them to a selection of West Indian food and helped create a vibrant and meaningful wall display. Parents are invited onto the setting's management committee and this gives them an opportunity to have their say and take part in decision-making. This helps to provide a vital link between the centre management, staff and parents. Children's welfare is hugely increased because their parents access the many family support services that are available to them, for example 'Stay and Play' sessions and a range of workshops. For example, workshops have been put on to help parents understand the value of cooking with their children and how maths can be promoted during everyday activities.

Parents are invited to discuss their children's progress on a regular basis and staff take time to ensure that parents fully understand the implications of Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage curriculum for their children. Staff share their observations of children, discuss assessment records and explain how their children are progressing. Each child has an individual profile that contains examples of their work and photographs of them at play and these provide parents with a visual record of their child's time at the setting. Parents are invited to contribute to the profile and many do and this helps to provide staff with a stimulus for conversation and creates a broader picture of their child and family life. Children are proud of their profiles and are keen to look at them and talk about what they see.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are very happy and settled in a welcoming environment. They enjoy secure and balanced routines, which contribute to a sense of belonging. A superb range of experiences are carefully planned and resources to support children's play and independence are easily accessible. Documentation to ensure the safe and effective management of the setting is suitably organised and most required paperwork is available for inspection. However, staff do not record the times that children arrive or leave the premises and as a result children's safety is compromised. Space and resources, within the nursery, are creatively and attractively organised and children's experiences are carefully planned by the staff team.

Children and their parents positively benefit from the dedication and commitment from staff members, evidenced through their everyday enthusiasm, qualifications and continuing professional development. Continual reflective practice is evident throughout the provision. Staff have attended a variety of training courses and regular staff meetings ensure clear and open communication channels exist between all staff in the provision. Satisfactory systems are in place to ensure that policies and procedures are followed and suitable recruitment, vetting and induction procedures are in place. Staff within the provision are constant and this contributes to consistency of care for children. Overall, children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of early education is outstanding. The management team effectively monitors all aspects of the provision for early education. They meet on a regular basis and thoroughly discuss and review the provision as a whole and the planning for individual children. All staff are actively encouraged to attend relevant training and also to be involved in the delivery of workshops for parents. In-house training and regular staff meetings enable good practice to be shared and strategies to be adopted in a consistent manner.

The manager of the setting inspires an extremely committed team. Staff are incredibly well supported and comment on how the manager is very approachable and always finds time to talk to staff, children and parents. She recognises the importance of building positive relationships with parents in order to work effectively with them and their children. Equality of opportunity is pivotal and is reflected in all policies and procedures. The aims of the centre are made absolutely clear through documentation made available to parents and via the attitude, practice and enthusiasm of staff. All staff share the management's high expectations and are very proud of the provision.

Staff work cohesively as a team and constant reflective practice ensures continual improvement and development. Staff practice is formally and regularly observed by the manager and her findings are effectively used to inform staff appraisals and their development plans. The content of children's profiles and progress records are actively monitored by management and the manager is a highly visible presence in the setting. This ensures that a high standard of teaching and learning is maintained and allows for regular two-way communication between staff and management.

Improvements since the last inspection

Care

At the last inspection the provider was asked to: ensure documentation relating to first aid and food hygiene training is available for inspection; improve overall standards of hygiene in the

kitchen area of the baby room; ensure child protection procedures include the role of Ofsted and ensure contact details for Ofsted are included in the complaints procedures.

Satisfactory improvements have been made to ensure children's welfare. All staff have attended first aid training and certificates are retained on the premises. Management confirm that catering staff and one of the deputy managers have attended food hygiene training. However, there is no paperwork available to provide documentary evidence relating to this training. Management describe how currently staff retain their own certificates but assure Ofsted that evidence of training will be retained on the premises in future. The kitchen area is observed to be clean and hygienic and documentation regarding child protection and complaints procedures include the requested detail.

Nursery Education

At the last inspection the provider was asked to improve staff understanding of the setting's behaviour management policy and to develop strategies to ensure consistent implementation by staff. The setting was also asked to improve record-keeping systems relating to the planning of activities and children's progress towards the early learning goals.

All staff have read the setting's behaviour management policy. A named person has responsibility for behaviour management issues and she ensures that all staff adopt a consistent and positive approach. All of the setting's policies are reviewed on a regular basis and staff are reminded of their responsibilities. Consequently, children receive consistency and behave very well.

Record-keeping systems clearly show how children are progressing towards the early learning goals and staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to use information gained from observations and assessments to inform future planning and move children on to their next steps in learning. As a result, experiences for children are greatly improved, monitoring of the provision for early education is easier and records can easily be used to assess children's progress and individual needs.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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):

- take positive steps to ensure children's good health; this specifically refers maintaining the cleanliness of the premises
- improve procedures for recording accidents and ensure that parents sign any entries in the accident record
- review risk assessments; this specifically refers to the safety of the pond, accessibility of hazardous items and the procedures for outings
- review complaints procedures in line with revised National Standards of October 2005
- ensure records show children's hours of attendance.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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