

Willow Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	131749
Inspection date	26 February 2008
Inspector	Vivienne Rose
Setting Address	Willow Children's Centre, 1a Holbrooke Court, LONDON, N7 0BF
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Registered person	London Borough of Islington
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care, Crèche

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?

Willow Early Years Centre, opened in the late sixties, and is managed by Islington Early Years. In 2006 it was developed in to a Children's Centre. The centre operates from a purpose built single storey building which consists of two main playrooms one for children aged two to five years and the other for children aged one to two years. There is a staff room, office space, training room and two rooms used for the community and additional services provided by the centre. It is situated in Upper Holloway in the of the London borough of Islington. The centre offers full day care to children from the local community. The centre provides crèche facilities alongside workshops and a stay and play service, a Saturday fathers group and services for childminders. They also offer extended day care to a small number of children. The centre also offers a health visitor session, midwives post natal clinic and workshops for parents and various other groups including a group for children with Downs Syndrome which is a parent led service.

A maximum of 70 children may attend the centre at any one time and it is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 48 weeks of the year. All children share access to a large secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 70 children from six months to five years on roll for the full day care. Of these, 29 children receive funding for nursery education. The centre supports a number of children with learning difficulties and /or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The centre employs 23 members of staff, three of whom are qualified teachers. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications and nine are working towards a qualification. The centre receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and welfare are well met. Staff have a good understanding of each child's health and medical needs and there are good procedures in place to ensure that these are appropriately met. Children with high dependency needs are well supported by trained staff. There are comprehensive procedures in place to ensure that all children's needs are regularly reviewed and agreed with parents. This enables children's needs to be met at all times.

Children's personal needs are well met because all staff encourage children to become independent in managing their personal routines for example, putting on their own coats as staff discuss that they need to be warm in the garden, most staff are vigilant however, staff sometimes forget to encourage children to wash their hands before eating when they come in from the garden before they eat. Children are well protected from infection and illness because staff provide a very clean well maintained environment. Children enjoy daily opportunities and take part in physical exercise throughout the day to encourage their good health and well-being. Children develop good muscle control and benefit from the fresh air. They develop their confidence and control as they test their skills when they balance and climb and use a wide range of equipment. They learn to push, pull and dig in the mud and peddle bikes to support their development and self-esteem. One child had great fun filling up the wheel barrow with earth as he told the inspector 'he was working'. Accidents records are in place. However, staff sometimes forget to ask parents to sign the accident record to fully ensure the wellbeing of children.

Children's dietary needs are well met, as they enjoy a wide range of freshly cooked meals each day. Children enjoy choosing from the lamb mince and vegetable pie and vegetable fajitas' and salad with fresh broccoli. Children show good skills they feed themselves and choose to have more broccoli 'because they like it' and then they explain that it is good for them. Children can help themselves to water to drink throughout the day. They have regular opportunities to choose from fresh fruit and yoghurt and to try new foods that they may not have tried before. Staff sit with children to encourage a homely atmosphere and children help wash the tables and prepare the places for sitting with place mats with photograph prompts to encourage children to know where to sit. This all contributes to the care, consideration and well-being of the children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are very child orientated and designed to enable children to access equipment and resources easily, including those with mobility difficulties. Children's safety and security is regarded as a high priority. Safety precautions are taken throughout the premises as staff are vigilant in identify potential hazards through regular risk assessment. Access to the premises

is closely monitored and the use of a visitor's book and swipe card entry mean that safety within the building is paramount. Children are closely supervised to make sure that they are well protected but at the same time they are allowed to test out their skills and independence.

There is a very good selection of high quality toys and equipment. All resources are stored at low-level, encouraging children to easily select their own resources safely and independently.

Children begin to learn about safety. They learn they must not run or they will hurt themselves and to be careful with the broom when helping to sweep up when they help staff to clear away for lunchtime. Children are protected from emergency situations. They regularly practise evacuations from the building and there are procedures in place should a child become lost or is uncollected.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection. Some of the staff have undertaken safeguarding training and are familiar with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Staff demonstrate that they understand the signs and symptoms of abuse. This enables them to follow the relevant procedures should they have any concerns about a child in their care. However, the setting's policy is in need of updating in line with recent changes to procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities to play and learn within an imaginative, warm and happy environment. Staff clearly understand children's differing needs and level of understanding, enabling them to stimulate and plan for their needs appropriately. However, the evaluation of the observations for children from two to three years is not always consistent. Children under three years benefit from staff knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They are confident in their relationships with staff and have strong bonds with their key workers which gives them a good sense of well-being. Children play well together, they learn to share and have respect for each others' feelings. There is good interaction between all staff and the children. Staff are highly attentive to each child's needs which helps them to feel settled and happy in the welcoming environment. Staff use family photograph books well when they cuddle up to children supporting their language development comfort and well-being. There are good opportunities for children to explore, experiment and investigate, Children play with a range of materials and media including sand, water, and spaghetti. They enjoy looking at books playing with sensory toys, constructing with puzzles and playing with the soft farm animals to support them to make connections with the world around them.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan a stimulating range of activities. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how to plan for the next steps for children using the stepping stone approach. They know the children well and there are systems in place to evaluate children's next steps. However, the observations made are not always consistently evaluated to enable staff to ensure children's progress in all the aspects of the stepping stones and their progress towards the early learning goals. There are medium and short term plans which are organised around the children's interests and development.

This ensures that staff are able to meet the children's individual needs, plans are inclusive to meet the needs of the children attending. However, some records are not as up to date as others, this means that not all staff are able to see children's progress easily.

Children enjoy listening to stories and they handle books appropriately, staff use non-verbal signs to help children whose language is not as developed as others to help them comprehend and to be fully involved. Children enjoy the 'Walking through the Jungle' story and make the sounds of the snake as it slithers. This supports their understanding of the sounds of letters and words. Children are given plenty of opportunities to begin to write their names correctly and to use pencils, paint and various mark making materials in the attractive designated writing areas. They enjoy writing and posting their letters to each other in the Willow Post Office. Good labelling in the rooms develops children's awareness that print carries meaning. The attractive book areas and the strong emphasis placed on these areas by staff means that children are developing the habit of handling books independently for enjoyment.

Children develop a positive attitude to others and a good understanding of the wider community. They have many opportunities to celebrate festivals, try food and use resources which show positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability. Children behave well. They are given lots of praise by the staff. Sticky labels are given for good listening and good helping, this supports children's self-esteem well. Children are beginning to learn right from wrong through consistent boundaries which are reinforced by staff. Children are encouraged to make room for others whilst listening to a story or to say 'excuse me' when they want to speak and not to interrupt others whilst speaking. They hang up their coats and help tidy away equipment showing skills and confidence.

Children regularly count and use mathematical language during activities. For example, they are developing and they enjoy counting the sausages one, two, three, four and five. They are asked to make more and they match and sort the cubes to see how many, or less than they may need. Some children count automatically 'look there is one two, three ducks'. They are learning about capacity when they fill the containers and measure the water in the water tray.

Physical play is enjoyed by the children throughout the day and a high priority is given by staff to ensuring that children make full use of this area. As a result all children have the opportunity to refine their skills in running, climbing and balance. Children get plenty of fresh air which encourages physical well-being, social skills and learning. They also learn about keeping themselves healthy through daily routines and projects about healthy eating. Children show good hand control when they cut out pictures, and paste them in the profile books and when they handle knives and forks when they eat their dinner. Children enjoy nature outside and inside as they learn about worms in the garden when digging and have the opportunity to grow seeds and beans in small pots and to watch them grow. Children show they are highly skilled when using the computer mouse to create their own pictures which are displayed by staff. Regular outings to local farms support children's understanding of the world around. The children enjoy making the large robot from card board boxes and hats to support their understanding of technology and design. They learn about cultural and religious similarities and differences when they celebrate Chinese New Year.

Children enjoy using their imagination when they play in the post office writing and posting letters. They have fun mixing the colours for painting to explore texture and colour techniques. Easy access to a wide variety of waste materials means that children are able to develop their own ideas and imagination well.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children's individual needs are respected and valued by staff. For example, the children celebrate Chinese New Year when they make spring rolls and practise Chinese writing. Each child is regarded as an individual and staff ensure that they are aware of each child's changing and differing needs. Staff offer challenges to children to encourage their independence and choice as a result children have high levels of self-esteem. They are clearly happy in the setting and enjoy interacting with staff. They greet staff enthusiastically and children confidently ask to take part in activities for example, when a child asks 'can I make a hat please?' which is supported by staff. Staff are aware of children's likes and dislikes and each baby has an entry profile with information collected from parents about their home routines. This enables staff to provide consistency of care. Children's personal care and individual needs are supported by staff. The centre is inclusive and staff have a wide experience of special needs care. The centre works with external agencies, parents and carers to meet the children's differing needs appropriately. This is supported through the centre's extensive additional services including their 'Downright Excellent' group.

Children's behaviour is managed well, staff are attentive to each child and use appropriate strategies for example, badges are awarded for good listening or good helping to help them develop high levels of self-esteem, self discipline and understanding right from wrong.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents speak highly of the support given to them and their children by staff. The welcoming atmosphere enables parents to visit the centre and to become involved in its day to day running which in turn benefits their children. Drop-in parents' groups such as 'stay and play' sessions help support parents to understand children's differing needs. Workshops held at the centre for example, on children's speech and language development give parents the opportunity to meet each other for support. Parents comments are valued and recorded in children's learning plans. Staff exchange information with parents on a daily basis open evenings are held three times a year to discuss children's progress and development. The prospectus for parents is regularly updated to ensure parents are fully informed about the service provided. The setting has a policy for recording complaints and there have been no complaints to record. However, the procedure for complaints is in need of updating in line with current legislation.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children attending. The well qualified staff team use their knowledge well to ensure that children make good progress in most areas of their learning. However, there are some inconsistencies in the evaluation of children's learning. The management is aware of this and has taken steps to review their methods to ensure that children's needs are fully met.

Staff demonstrate good knowledge of the setting's policies and procedures and implement these effectively to ensure that children are kept safe and well. Children benefit from good staff ratios which ensure that they are consistently well supported.

The leadership and management of the nursery are good. Staff deployment is good with many children receiving individual attention and close supervision. Activities are accessible and inviting for children, these impact on their security and as a result they are relaxed and confident. The

management have developed a skilled, enthusiastic staff team who are dedicated and work well together to provide the children with the opportunities to progress. There are good processes for monitoring and evaluating the teaching, is in place and staff induction is regularly reviewed, this ensures that new staff are familiar with the setting's policies and procedures. The premises are designed to enable staff to organise free-flow activity areas within a safe environment. Staff meet regularly to assess and plan for children's achievements using daily progress and assessment plans.

The majority of documentation is maintained in full. The children's records are stored confidentially and are regularly revised however, staff do not always remember to request parents to acknowledge accidents when they occur. The setting is yet to update its policy on child protection and complaints in line with current procedures and to make these available to parents.

Additional Services

The provision for community support is a strength of the setting. The centre offers a wide range drop-ins for parents and carers in the local community. Staff use their childcare skills to plan a range of activities and workshops to support their children's development. Parents are encouraged to participate in these planned activities, and as a result their confidence grows. An active parents' forum means that parents get to have a say in the centre's activities and the resources that are provided. The confidence they develop has an impact on their children's learning. Users of the service speak highly of the centre, and spread the word throughout the community. Healthy eating is promoted throughout the centre and projects take place to encourage parents to promote this. A key strength of the centre is that it is reaching out to all sections of the community including the fact that it has thriving Dad's drop-in group which operates on Saturday. The first time parents, post natal support and baby massage group impacts on decreased isolation for parents and carers.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection one recommendation was raised regarding planning for the children's next steps in learning. The setting has made satisfactory progress in this area as staff now observe and plan using children's interests as a starting point. Focus activities are planned to ensure that children are given suitable play opportunities to reinforce these skills.

At the last nursery education inspection two recommendations were raised for consideration. The management now monitors staff interaction and planning for children however, the setting is still to ensure that consistency is maintained in the evaluation of observations and planning the next steps for children in all aspects of the early learning goals.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- ensure that staff request a written acknowledgement from parents of all accidents when they occur.

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 that observations and evaluations are consistently maintained to provide a clear picture of children's developmental progress.

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