

Snowberry Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	155051
Inspection date	15 October 2007
Inspector	Shaheen Belai
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Registered person	London Borough of Waltham Forest
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?

Snowberry Children's Centre is a local authority provision, managed by the London Borough of Waltham Forest and registered in 1992. The setting provides children with the use of four play rooms, hall area, meeting room, sensory room, outdoor play area and children's toilets.

The setting operates Monday - Friday from 08:00 - 18:00, for 48 weeks a year. In addition to the nursery provision the setting also provides an outreach service for families with children under the age of five years living in the Cathall ward area of the Borough. These children and families are referred by an appropriate professional agency. This service also links into four full time equivalent sessions within the setting, for those recognised to require additional input. The setting is also used for family contact sessions, this is a service organised and provided in partnership with the local authority.

A maximum of 57 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 64 children aged six months to under five years attending. Of these, 23 children receive nursery education funding. The setting currently supports a number of children with English as an additional language and children with a disability or learning difficulty.

The setting employs 13 members of staff. Of these, 10 staff hold an appropriate early years qualification and two are working towards gaining a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives the support of the local authority advisor and is participating in the Quilt quality assurance scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and welfare needs are well met. Staff have a good understanding of each child's health and medical needs. There are good procedures in place to ensure that these are appropriately met. Children are well protected from infection and illness because staff provide a clean and well maintained environment. Staff promote good hygiene practices to prevent the spread of infection, such as wearing disposable aprons and gloves when changing nappies.

Children are clearly learning methods to keep themselves healthy. Older children confidently wash their hands before eating and young toddlers are supported in hand washing after using the potty. Visitors, such as the dental hygienist support children's understanding of the importance of personal care. A number of staff are trained in current first aid practice and this contributes to the wellbeing of children. Children are further protected, as staff gather relevant medical information and obtain written consent from parents for emergency medical treatment.

Children's dietary needs are well met. All children enjoy a healthy range of cooked meals and snacks, which are prepared within the setting. High levels of independence is supported by staff, allowing for children to serve themselves and assist their peers. This is organised well to promote self help skills, such as setting the table, helping themselves to additional servings and clearing away their own plates. Meal and snack times are a sociable session, for children to chat, learn social manners and develop an understanding of healthy eating. Staff follow individual feeding patterns for very young babies and support young toddlers with developing skills to feed themselves. Older children's understanding of healthy eating is further promoted through cooking activities and the growing of produce in the garden.

Children thoroughly enjoy daily opportunities to take part in physical exercise outside every day. In addition, activities are organised indoors for large physical play. This enables children to develop physical skills, muscle control and fine skills. Children benefit from using the outdoor play area as an extension to their indoor learning environment. Staff skilfully organise the outdoor area to provide a range of stimulating activities and take into account providing a quiet area. For example a book corner and a creative area. Children of all ages enjoy the fresh air, running freely, steering around and through the well formed hedges and under the parachute. Young babies have space and resources appropriately organised outdoors for their stage of development and enjoy the interaction with the older children. Children access equipment to allow for them to learn to pedal, kick, climb, balance and develop their walking skills. Indoors they have opportunities to play in the ball pond or use the large soft equipment to build, climb and balance on. Children are learning to develop their fine physical skills, as they learn to use cutlery, build with construction, use varied sized brushes and mark making equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children are familiar of their surroundings and this is further supported from the display work displayed and child orientated environment. This provides children with a sense of belonging. Children are able to move freely and safely. The well maintained and good quality resources for care and learning are stimulating, age appropriate and reflective of the needs of the children attending. For example young babies have cots to sleep in and support cushions to enable them to play safely with support. The majority of play resources are stored at low level, this helps children in making choices about their play.

Children's safety is promoted daily, as staff carry out regular written risk assessments. Access to the premises is highly monitored and effective deployment in the front entrance ensures close supervision. Children regularly participate in practice evacuations, allowing for children to become aware of procedures in the case of an emergency. Staff are deployed well within the setting and children only have access to specific areas within the setting. Children learn to understand how to keep themselves safe, from gentle reminders provided by staff. For example, running indoors is not safe.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection. Management have undertaken appropriate training and are familiar with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures. This enables the setting staff to follow the relevant procedures should concerns arise.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities to play and learn and spend their time purposefully occupied in learning activities. Staff clearly understand the children's differing needs and level of learning, which enables them to plan accordingly for their individual needs. Children under three years benefit from the implementation of the Birth to three matters framework. The under threes benefit from the close relationships they have developed with their key workers. This provides them with a sense of belonging and wellbeing. They welcome staff interaction and play well together with peers. They learn the importance of sharing and turn taking with support from adult guidance. Children happily explore their surroundings and the activities on offer. The children participate in a range of creative play, imaginative play, exploration play, sensory play, activities using natural resources and opportunities to develop their vocabulary. Children play well with the activities planned and provided for them, in addition they make choices from resources stored in low storage. This allows for them to extend their play ideas and address new challenges. Children are involved in a balance of both adult led activities and self initiated play.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan a good range of play and learning activities. Staff awareness of the Foundation stage informs them of the provision of range of activities that covers all areas of learning. Staff carry out regular brief observations on each individual child in their key groups and use these to assess progress. The learning outcomes are monitored and used to plan for the next stepping stones. Staff have regular planning meetings to discuss each child's individual stage of learning and devise plans to include suitable activities to enable children to move towards the Early Learning Goals.

Children show independence in their self-care skills, such as locating and putting on their own coats and attempting to do up fastenings. They are confident to share experiences from home with both staff and peers. They show pride and responsibility when given tasks to do, such as assisting with clearing away or helping to set the table for lunchtime. The children show good levels of concentration as they work in small and large groups, and are eager to share their learning and ideas with staff.

Children develop a good interest of books and this is enhanced with the varied range provided and the organisation to access books within the setting. Children look at books independently, with peers and are eager to have books read to them by staff. Opportunities for children to develop mark making and early writing skills is highly promoted by staff. For example, they have free access to writing material indoors, the use of wipe boards and the arrangement of an office area in the garden. Children learn to identify individual letters and the sounds, this enhances their pre-reading skills. Name cards and labelling is in place but not used effectively to promote children's awareness that print carries meaning. For example, recognition is not given to younger pre-school children who require both text and picture labels to relate the link or children having free access to their name cards for learning to label their own work. This impacts on children's early writing and reading skills.

The children confidently count to ten and beyond. They have opportunities to extend their learning in this area with activities specifically set up for learning to count and they also use numbers in songs and rhymes. However, opportunities are missed by staff to extend children's learning of early addition and subtraction. For example when children assist with setting out cutlery and plates, opportunities to calculate are not explored. Children demonstrate they recognise shapes, when they draw around stencils or describe their cuttings.

Children are learning about the environment. For example they grow vegetables in the garden and explore what the universe is. They extend their learning in these areas, such as cooking with their grown produce or handling and tasting freeze dried space food. Children use the computer with confidence and are able to concentrate for long periods as they persevere and complete educational activities. They learn to handle other forms of technology, such as walkie-talkies. The sensory area in the setting contributes to their senses being stimulated, such as exploring the light converters.

Children use a range of musical instruments to play with independently or in organised activities. The children learn a range of songs and rhymes and are eager to voice their choices with staff and peers. They develop good imaginative skills in the home corner area, accessing the well organised materials to support their roles. Children participate in numerous activities where they explore a variety of colours, textures and mediums. They make their own play dough, mix their own corn flour and explore using a range of tools to complete their activities. For example they use stamp cutters with concentration and skill.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are respected and well valued by staff. Each child is regarded as an individual and staff ensure that they are aware of each child's needs. This allows for staff to take relevant information into account when planning, such as dietary needs, language needs and religious practices. Children learn about themselves and the community around them, through discussion, resources and the positive approach by staff. Photographs, posters and play materials reflect positive outlooks to various cultures, gender roles, disability and religious

values. Staff provide appropriate support for children with English as an additional language. For example, staff learn familiar words and phrases to provide comfort and support. This enables the children to feel a sense of security and be understood. The setting provides inclusive care for all children and work in close partnership with parents and professionals for children who have a disability or a learning difficulty. Staff monitor progress and plan activities that are accessible to all.

Children behave well. Good staff deployment, interaction and supervision contributes to children being occupied in purposeful play and any incidents of unacceptable behaviour being addressed promptly. Clear explanations and positive re-enforcement of good behaviour contributes to children recognising what behaviour is acceptable. Children benefit from consistent praise provided for their good behaviour and achievements, and they have a recognition of the basic ground rules in place. Gentle reminders promote younger children's understanding of sharing and turn taking. Older children learn to take responsibility in this area, as they learn to use sand timers for specific activities. Staff address each child's behaviour as an individual case, and use consistent and effective strategies that are reflective of that child's age, understanding and behaviour presented. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff have developed positive relationships with the staff and this enhances the care of the children. Parents are welcomed into the setting, encouraged to settle their children in gradually and participate in regular activities if they wish. Staff seek relevant and required information from parents from the on-set and update regularly, as may be required to ensure the overall wellbeing of the children in their care. Staff exchange information with parents on a daily basis through verbal discussions and with daily diary sheets sent home for young babies and toddlers. The exchange of information contributes to planning and updating children's care needs. Parent's of all children have access to their children's development files and are included in periodic meetings to discuss progress and further plans. This allows for parents to have relevant information for them to be involved in their child's learning. Activity plans are in place in each room reflecting the different plans followed for specific age groups, such as Birth to three framework and the Foundation stage.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a well organised setting. Staff are very professional in their approach and are clear of their roles and responsibilities. Staff work well as a team and meet the required ratios. Staff are deployed well within the setting and when outdoors and this contributes to children's safety and wellbeing. The key worker system is implemented well and staff are familiar with the care and learning needs of the children in their care. Children are happy, settled and confident in the setting. They spend their time occupied in stimulating and age appropriate play. All required documentation is maintained. However, attendance records are not maintained effectively to record the times of arrival and departure for each child. This impacts on children's safety.

The leadership and management is good. There are effective procedures in place for staff and student induction. Staff benefit from regular supervision and staff meetings. This allows management to recognise weaknesses, strengths and review work practices. Management is supportive in staff attending further training and in encouraging staff to work towards gaining a recognised child care qualification if they are not qualified. The manager regularly meets and oversees the role of the lead staff responsible for the planning and delivery of the Foundation stage curriculum. This ensures that the delivery of the curriculum and the monitoring systems

are reviewed. The setting receives the support of the local authority advisor. The setting is also completing relevant Quilt modules, this forms part of a national quality assurance scheme to improve teaching and learning. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting agreed to organise space to meet the needs of children over three years of age. Positive steps have been taken to use space effectively to meet the needs of the pre-school children. They have the use of the main play room designated to this age group in addition to the garden area, which is used as an extension of the indoor learning environment. For small group activities, the hall area provides resources and space for both physical and quiet activities. The meeting room is also available for small group work with children, if required.

Nursery education.

At the last inspection the quality of nursery education was judged as very good. The setting was required to promote independent use of books and dressing up for children. The setting now provides three focal points for pre-school children to access books independently, these being in the play room, outdoors and hall area. Children are confident in accessing books in their play room and out door area during the main part of the day. The home corner area is used effectively used by children who confidently seek dressing up material, that is provided within their reach by staff.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004, Ofsted have received one complaint on 29/03/2005; relating to National Standard 1: Suitable person and National Standard 2: Organisation. This involved the suitability of the role of the manager in addressing staff behaviour and concerns about staffing ratios. An unannounced visit was carried out on 05/04/2005. As a result of the visit the provider was given an action and a recommendation under National Standard 14. The provider has addressed these satisfactorily. Complaints raised and their outcomes are now recorded in detail and addressed within a specified period. Ofsted was notified of relevant staff changes. The provider met the National Standards and remained qualified for registration at the time the investigation was closed.

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 attendance records are maintained to include children's individual arrival and departure times

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 clear labelling in text and print are used throughout the children's area and name cards are used effectively
- extend opportunities for children to develop the learning of simple addition and subtraction as part of the daily routine.

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