

Newstead Children & Family Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	154613
Inspection date	05 March 2008
Inspector	Maggie Thorp
Setting Address	Fallows Close, East Finchley, London, N2 8LG
Telephone number	020 8359 3460
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Registered person	London Borough Of Barnet
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 outstanding. 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?

Newstead first opened in 1995 and has recently been designated a children's centre. It has purpose built premises situated in East Finchley in the London borough of Barnet and is run by the local authority. The centre offers day care and education to both local children and families and to those who have been identified as being 'in need'. It is open from 08.00 to 18.00 for approximately 48 week a year.

A maximum of 26 children under eight may attend at any one time and there are currently 26 on role, of these eight currently receive nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of places. The centre currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Children who speak English as an additional language also attend.

There are eight members of staff working with the children including a nursery teacher. All are qualified in childcare and early years education. In addition, there is a head of centre, deputy, two senior workers, administrator, cook, two general assistants and a handy person on the staff team. The centre has links with a Barnet Early Years advisory team, a special educational needs

co-ordinator, social workers and a number of support agencies. The centre also runs a number of other services in the local community.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's good health is promoted extremely effectively by every part of the provision. Excellent systems are in place to foster children's physical and emotional health and to prevent the spread of infection. Children are learning about good hygiene. They really enjoy the challenge of washing and drying their own hands, wiping their own noses and dressing and undressing independently. This is supported by all the resources children need being at hand and by the gentle encouragement of staff. The preparation of meals, nappy changing, and maintenance of the cleanliness of toys and equipment is very well organised and carried out. Children enjoy participating in some of these tasks alongside staff for example, washing tables before meals and taking things to the laundry room.

The temperature of indoor areas is monitored and great lengths have been taken to enable children to be warm inside and to have open access to the garden. Extra heaters have been placed in the conservatory and staff consult room thermometers and adjust thermostats to this end. Great care is taken to ensure children who are unwell or who have accidents receive good care and that parents are kept fully informed. Moreover, on occasions, staff help parents to get medical help and to follow up any concerns they have about their child's health.

Children enjoy an exceptionally well balanced, nutritional diet and are gaining an excellent understanding of healthy eating. Fresh food is prepared on site each day by a very well qualified, experienced cook. Meals include ingredients from a variety of different cultures and are very attractively served. Children have a starter and main course one day and a main course and dessert the next. Mealtimes are superbly organised to encourage children's enjoyment and independence and to set patterns for future good eating. Children and staff sit in small key person groups and children serve themselves from the serving dishes at each table. The centre works closely with parents to ensure staff fully understand children's eating habits and preferences and are clear about foods they must not eat. Children who are wary of new foods and who have poor appetites are given lots of support and encouragement to widen their diet and to enjoy handling food. Staff, children and parents participate in regular healthy eating projects and a nutritionist is brought in to help with this.

Children relish the freedom they have to run, play and explore outdoors in all weathers. They are gaining very good coordination and control over their bodies as they play. The centre provides children with umbrellas, boots and cagoules for wet weather play. Staff ensure children have hats and sun cream on in hot weather and they are vigilant about ensuring children are wrapped up warmly when it is cold. Children rest and play in comfort. Little quiet areas with attractive drapes, settees and rest mats have been created for children who are tired.

Children are making excellent progress in their physical development. They are becoming very confident and skilled as they use the exceptionally well planned and resourced outdoor play space. Great care is taken to provide activities and equipment that will challenge and enthuse each child. Children participate in running games specifically designed to build memory skills as well as physical skills and to help children with disabilities exercise specific muscles. Children dig and lift logs in the exploratory garden, and move large smooth stones to make imaginary

worlds or patterns. They balance, climb and dare to take risks on the ramps and climbing frame all carefully supervised by staff. Children are confident and skilled in manoeuvring wheeled toys and combine this with acting out roles, for example, of being fire fighters. This is stimulated by children visiting the fire station and a book of photographs about this being out in the garden.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's natural curiosity as learners is promoted exceptionally well by the thoughtfully planned environment indoors and outside. Indoors, the edges of the larger room have been divided into little bays packed with exciting materials for children to explore. Children move confidently between these areas for example, making books in the writing area, finding favourite programmes in the computer bay, printing in the art workshop or sorting and discussing photographs at the large table. Many children enjoy exploring the series of bays for sand, water and dough play. Each have well labelled resources to support and encourage children to experiment.

Children choose from an excellent selection of very interesting resources in the garden. This is set out each day with the specific interests of the children attending in mind. In addition to all the vigorous play opportunities, children learn to plant at one table, read books in a large quilt covered container in a quiet part of the garden and count as they follow the trail of ribbons woven into the fence in the shape of numbers.

Children and parents are made to feel welcome as they arrive both by staff greeting them and by the attractiveness of the entrance hall which has lots of interesting displays. Children also indirectly benefit from the comfortable spaces created for parents to meet and talk and for staff to relax. The parent room has books and tea and coffee making facilities and there is a computer with internet access that parents can use. The centre also has a well equipped kitchen, offices and laundry. Children's bathrooms are en suite to both group rooms. They are newly refurbished and have been designed to foster children's independence very effectively.

Children thrive in this safe but challenging environment because adults operate well thought out safety procedures and thorough risk assessment for every aspect of the provision. The centre has a designated health and safety officer who regularly reviews all safety procedures. When building or maintenance work is taking place excellent steps are taken to ensure the areas children use, and where work is taking place, are kept separate and that work personal are well informed of the precautions they must take in regard to trailing wires, safe tool storage and access to the building. Fire safety is good and there are drawings of escape routes in each room to ensure those who do not read English understand how to leave the building safely. Staff are vigilant in protecting children's safety on outings. They visit before hand to assess any risks and plan the visit in fine detail. Children wear labels with the centre telephone number on and two mobile phones are taken on each trip.

Children are learning to keep safe through the projects and outings they participate in. Recently they enjoyed a road safety session when children watched a performance about this. Parents were invited so that they could reinforce what children were learning. Children dressed up and learnt about traffic lights, zebra crossing use, using seat belts and looking and listening as they cross the road. This was followed up by roadways, road signs and wheeled toys set out in the garden next day. One child explained 'we have to hold hands'. The children are helped to put what they have learnt into practice when visiting local parks and shops. Children are further

safeguarded by the sound child protection policies, the well established procedures in place and the good training all staff receive.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young children are learning an enormous amount as they play as they have excellent opportunities to explore and enjoy a wealth of experiences without this becoming overwhelming. Each day is very well organised so that children have their key person at hand to support and encourage their play. In addition, they have regular small group times when they can relax and chat about what they have been doing. Children are focussed and absorbed as they create and imagine. They enjoy painting, sticking and cutting in the art workshop area or standing painting at an easel in the garden. Two children painting together compare the effects of their brush strokes. Children also spend time creating imaginary worlds using the extensive range of pretend play materials all ready accessible in the block play area and dressing up and making imaginary meals for each other in the home play area.

Many children are very confident communicators, they chat to staff and each other throughout the day. This is partly due to there being so many interesting things happening for children to talk about. Children learning English as an additional language or who have yet to develop good language skills receive excellent support. Adults use signing and, because they know children well, they are able to correctly interpret children's pointing and gestures and put into words what children want to communicate. There are lots of picture labels in the room to help children understand the routine of the day and to enable non verbal children to indicate their choices. At 'listening time' children go and get the picture of the song they want from the display beside them. Children also enjoy using song boxes. Each box contains little props that reflect favourite songs. Children opening one box found strings of stars and sang 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' as they waived these above their heads.

Children enjoy rich sensory experiences and explore their environment using their whole bodies. They experiment with wet and dry sand, water, mud and dough indoors and outside. Children making cakes with black play dough squeeze, poke and chop it pausing from time to time to exam the results of their actions. Children stand feeding balls into a helter seltzer and they laugh as they tumble out the other end. Then, when this stops, they reach inside and try to work out why they have got stuck and how to free them. Children squat beside a tray of large smooth stones, they feel the coolness and weight of each one as they purposefully pick them up and move them around. Children raking leaves in the growing plot point excitedly to a worm poking out of the ground and try to pick it up. Children's learning is enhanced by staff being beside children describing and helping them make sense of what they discover.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Excellent ways of observing, tracking and planning for children's development are being established. Staff take photographs and make short, informative observations of children's achievements and interests throughout each day. Staff and children discuss these and with children's help they paste them into a profile book for each child. Staff record children's progress under each area of learning on one large sheet. This enables staff and parents to see at a glance where children are achieving the most and where more provision needs to be planned to encourage children's learning. These records are used by each child's key person to plan subsequent experiences.

Children are extremely confident and independent and are developing very good self-esteem. They move purposefully around the indoor and outdoor areas choosing what they want to explore. Children are very keen to try new activities and they concentrate well. Moreover, they enjoy being the experts and passing on their knowledge to others. A child who is able to read enjoys reading to other children. A child who has completed a planting activity is encouraged by staff to explain to a child just joining them how to do this. Children are very caring towards each other. When one child is upset another tries to comfort them with a hug.

Children really enjoy talking about what they are doing and what they have done. Photographs, displays, home made books and computers are used very effectively to encourage children to record and reflect on and discuss their experiences. Children are developing a great interest in books and in writing. They turn to books they have made with staff for information. For example, children planting beans and seeds found the picture of what a fully grown bean stalk and what cress looks like in a book they had made when they were planting on another occasion. Children also enjoy story books and are often found on the settees beside the two book corners enjoying stories with an adult, or stretched out looking at a book independently. Children make their own books in the mark making area. Adults help children form letters when they want to write and to label their own work. Children are learning to hear the sounds that make up words, in small group rhyme times. They enjoy rhyming their names and making up silly rhymes, children also go on listening walks to develop this skill. Some have a secure knowledge of letter sounds and names and can read many words.

Children relish the challenges provided as they learn to count, sort, compare and measure. Numbers are displayed indoors and outside children read the woven ribbon numbers on the fence, and they match bikes with numbers to the numbered parking bays. Children take out tape measures and measure each other. They compare the differences and similarities of the beans and seeds they are planting and of the large smooth stones in the garden. Adults help children compare the size and weight of different stones and to sort them into groups. Children are learning the names of two and three dimensional shapes as they engage in block play and when making pictures from felt shapes for example, children made lollypop, face and rocket pictures.

Children are gaining an excellent knowledge of nature, the local environment and of the world of work. Children enjoy exploring the plot of garden set aside especially for this. They rake leaves and turn over logs looking for insects and trying to identify what they have found. Children plant beans and seeds, and learn what these need to help them grow. They watch, photograph and discuss the progress of a pipe laying project in their street and learn the names of the machinery and processes being used. Children are very confident in using the computers. They are able to choose programmes and operate the mouse to play games and look at the photographs stored there. They also use the digital camera and show each other with pride the photographs they have taken. They enjoy visiting the local woods and going on wider trips for example, to the zoo. Children are learning about many different jobs people do by visiting places such as the fire station, local shops, by going on bus rides and by the police, dentist and road safety people visiting them.

Children's creativity and imagination is fostered very effectively. They use a wide variety of resources to make pictures and models. These are all set out in the art workshop and the mark making areas where children can help themselves to materials. In the workshop children work with many different painting and printing resources, collage and recycled materials. Children concentrate for long periods in the mark making area, children experiment with different resources to see how they work and what they do and they explore the little drawers of resources.

Staff are at hand to encourage this very effectively. A child interested in how a hole punch worked was helped to discover this and he went on to find string and tape and made a kite which he then took outside to fly in the wind. Children have recently taken part in a community art in the park project and had their work shown at the local arts centre.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's confidence and self-esteem is promoted in highly effective ways through the key person system that is in place. All children all have a key person who visits the child at home then slowly settles them into the nursery. The children have continuity of care because there is lots of liaison and information exchanging between their parents and the key person. She gets to know important details that help the child feel secure for example, who looks after them at home, what they like to eat, family birthdays, and special things about their culture. In addition, the key person carries out all their child's physical care whenever possible and children have back up co-workers for when their special person is absent.

Children are learning to understand and appreciate each other's similarities and differences extremely well. In addition to staff learning about children's homes and backgrounds and being highly effective in making links between home and nursery, children are using books, resources, meals and displays that are very diverse and positive. Information is displayed in many of the 13 languages spoken by families attending for example, for the recent dental hygiene project. Moreover, the display of staff photographs includes text about which languages staff speak to help children and parents know who can help with any communication difficulties.

Equality is further promoted by the excellent support offered to children with disabilities to ensure that they are included and valued by other children. All children are interested and involved because of the excellent care staff take to ensure each child is appropriately encouraged and challenged. Parents, staff and other agencies work very closely to identify how any children with learning difficulties and disabilities can be supported in reaching their full potential. An example of this is how children with communication difficulties are helped by the weekly visits of speech and language therapists. Children with physical disabilities are able to use special equipment to help them fully participate. Staff skilfully plan games and activities that include some of the specific planned targets of children with disabilities and learning difficulties but that can be played and enjoyed by all children. Children with difficulties in one aspect of their development are deliberately recognised and given credit for their skills in another. Children also benefit from the help centre staff give parents so that they can make links with organisations providing additional support and resources.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered very effectively. Children's behaviour is good because they feel good about themselves. Staff praise and encourage children very effectively thus reinforcing positive behaviour and good social habits. They are praised for being able to wait, share and help others and are gently prompted to say thank you. Children greet each other and staff when they arrive, and as they leave they are helped to say goodbye to everyone. Children enjoy the way their ideas are listened to by staff and are learning to value themselves and each other through this. Recently a lot of thought and planning went into involving children in deciding about where they would go for the annual nursery outing. Children helped set up little models of the three choices: to visit animals, the seaside or a theme park. Children and parents voted and their choice was acted upon.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Children gain enormous benefit from the way the centre includes, respects and supports parents in their role. Parents and their child's key person meet to plan how to settle a new child into the centre. They exchange lots of information about the child and about what happens at the nursery. Parents spend time nearby in the parents' room as children get used to being without them and staff pop in and keep parents informed. The parents' room is an excellent resource that parents designed and decorated themselves. They use this for social contact, to access the internet, use the computer and have meetings.

Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress. They regularly meet with their child's key person, and they contribute to, look at and discuss their child's profile book with staff. Parents are given a great deal of information about special projects at the centre as well as the day to day activities planned. Each project is organised so that parents are included and so there are ways for parents to follow up what children are learning at home. Examples of such projects are the dental health, healthy eating and road safety projects. In school holidays projects and events are organised that parents can bring older children to as well. There are 'Celebrating Parents and Families' days when parents try out and learn why certain activities are provided for children.

Parents are helped to access many other resources and professionals through the centre. These include benefit advice sessions, surgeries on supporting children with learning difficulties and disabilities for parents and career and job seeking advice. In addition, the regular centre newsletter includes useful telephone numbers for example, Gingerbread, Home Start and a Domestic Violence Support Service. Links are made to help parents with disabilities support at home for example through outreach workers. There are parenting classes and some parents described how just working alongside staff helped them get ideas and new strategies for parenting.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children and parents benefit hugely from the superb organisation and excellent monitoring and assessment that ensures every aspect of the provision is of a very high quality. The staff team are well qualified and exceptionally motivated and enthusiastic. This includes managers, administrators and domestic staff as well as those working directly with children. The recruitment and selection procedure is highly effective and ensures that safe, suitable people are employed. In addition, many opportunities are provided for staff to extend their skills by taking on new responsibilities.

Children share excellent relationships with staff. The exemplary key person system ensures that children are learning and developing because they are emotionally secure. Staff are extremely well informed about children and the organisation of the day ensures there is time for children to develop trusting relationships with their key person.

Health and safety is a high priority and children are protected by very good supervision and extremely thorough risk assessment. In addition, staff are proactive in working with parents and other agencies to promote children's health very effectively. Strong links are made with health visitors, nutritionists, speech therapists, advice workers and many other professionals. Health and safety projects are planned very skilfully to ensure both children and parents can fully participate and benefit from these.

The centre has recently been designated a children's centre. The building has yet to undergo structural changes to provide more space for its wider remit. However, it is highly effective already in reaching out, making links and setting up new joint projects with other services. This greatly benefits the children attending and their parents and the wider community. The centre runs or co-leads many groups, classes, and services. Staff work with the local library staff to offer 'Baby Rhyme Time' and baby massage sessions, the centre uses two local community centres courses such as 'Fun 4 Babies' and parenting classes. They put on 'Stay and Play' sessions alongside the child health clinic, hold first aid for children training and are developing many other services. These are all well planned to ensure that they are relevant to the local community and encourage the outcomes for children that the government have identified in 'Every Child Matters'.

Children's welfare and individual needs are well met by the group who have exceptionally well kept records in place to support their understanding of each child. Records are kept confidentially maintaining the child's privacy. This excellent care is underpinned by well thought out policies and procedures that are implemented very effectively, and a clear, well organised operational plan. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The high quality of children's care and education is directly linked to the amount of time allowed for staff to reflect on and discuss their practice and the high priority given to staff training. This ensures that the curriculum and teaching methods take full account of the children's individual needs and the diverse ways in which children learn. A qualified teacher has been recently introduced to the staff team and this has been highly effective in empowering all staff as they observe, plan and reflect on children's learning.

The managers say that their passion is to provide the best possible education, care and family support. To this end management are continually developing and evaluating the provision. They are clear about the strengths of what is provided and areas they want to develop. They have well thought out action plans in place to address perceived weaknesses and to reinforce good practice.

The strong leadership of the centre supports staff in delivering a highly successfully early education programme for all children.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the recommendations made have been implemented to children and parent's with very good effect. The recommendation to provide parents with more notice of events and staff changes whenever possible has been implemented very effectively. Notices are now posted as soon as possible to alert parents to changes. Reminders are sent by text of important events. There are newsletters each term, large displays in the entrance hall and lots of conversations with parents. The recommendation to review cover arrangements during staff lunch breaks to ensure appropriate staff:child ratios are maintained to fully support each child has been followed very well. Shifts have been re-organised and breaks staggered to ensure ratios maintained over lunch breaks. In addition, domestic staff have been brought in to offer further support.

The key issues regarding funded children's nursery education have been addressed. One was to develop story times to match children's age and understanding more accurately to ensure children's interest in books and listening to stories is being fostered effectively. Excellent

progress has been made here. Now children split into 'listening groups' according to ability and certain staff are attached to each group to ensure there is continuity for children. Children enjoy stories and songs, finely tuned to their developmental level. The second key issue raised was to monitor the new planning and assessment systems to ensure they support children in making progress in all aspects of each learning area. Since then a new planning system has been put in place. This is being regularly assessed to check it is meeting children's needs and helping children make progress across all areas of learning.

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 outstanding. 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

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

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