

Community College Childcare

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY267742
Inspection date	15 November 2007
Inspector	Anne Daly
Setting Address	Thurrock Adult Community College, Richmond Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6DN
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Registered person	Thurrock Borough Council
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Thurrock Adult Community College Childcare is managed by Thurrock Borough Council. It opened in 2002, operating from a large and two smaller rooms within a purpose-built annexe of the college. A maximum of 40 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting opens from 09:15 until 15:00 Mondays to Fridays and between 10:00 and 14:00 very occasionally on Saturdays for 39 weeks of the year. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 117 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 47 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider catchment areas. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also children who have English as a second language.

The setting employs 12 staff. Ten of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are currently working towards qualifications. The setting receives support from the Local Authority and from the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children remain healthy because they are beginning to show good levels of understanding of simple health and hygiene practices, such as blowing their noses and using individual hand towels following washing their hands with liquid soap after using the toilet. They are being actively reminded of such good hand washing practices through posters and signs above the washbasins. Some children understand why poor hygiene may affect their health, such as knowing that their hands may carry germs. However, children's health may potentially be compromised through some of the paper towel bins having missing lids.

Staff are vigilant in addressing and implementing everyday hygiene routines to protect all children at the setting. Younger children are being protected from cross-infection during nappy changing by staff following good procedures, such as wearing disposable gloves, covering the changing mat and disinfecting it after each child. Children are also benefiting from staff following well-planned cleaning routines to maintain a hygienic environment, such as cleaning the tables with antibacterial liquids before children eat their food.

Children are being protected through some staff members holding first aid qualifications and always being available to effectively handle their minor injuries. Accident records are being appropriately maintained and parents have given their prior written permission for staff to administer medicines. Staff appropriately record the medication, but some parents have not countersigned at the end of sessions to acknowledge that their child has been given medication. Therefore, potentially children's welfare is not being fully protected if their parents are unaware of medication being given to them. The setting's sickness policy is freely available to parents and carers, although it may potentially compromise children's well-being by not including exclusion times for children with upset tummies.

Children's individual dietary needs are being well met through staff requesting information from their parents and carers about any dietary requirements and allergies. Children are learning about healthy eating through snack and lunch time discussions, cooking activities and topics. Some members of staff are encouraging children to think about foods which are good for them and those which are not so good. Staff are providing healthy snacks and parents are providing packed lunches for children supporting the setting's healthy eating approach. Children have access to drinking water at all times to ensure that they do not become thirsty.

Children are able to move freely around the setting and to join in with activities according to their individual needs and interests. They have some opportunities to play outside in the fresh air, when they are able to practise large scale movements. They are developing their coordination and spatial awareness when using a variety of apparatus, including a very varied range of ride-on toys and a climbing frame. They are able to manipulate dough, with some children using single handed tools, such as scissors, cutters and pencils, with competence and control.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe, secure and well cared for in a purpose-built annexe of the college, which has been specifically converted to cater for their age range. Children's work and posters are displayed at various levels to create a welcoming environment for them and to promote their self-esteem.

They can freely select from a wide range of toys and equipment to successfully promote their individual developmental needs. Staff ensure that children's security is being enhanced by padlocking the high entrance gate and by alarming the fire exit door to alert them if anyone opens the door. All visitors are carefully screened by being asked to sign in and out of a visitors book.

Written risk assessments and procedures for the premises help staff to safeguard children from potential hazards. The ramp leading into the setting is currently not safe, resulting in arrival and collection procedures being changed and an alternative fire evacuation procedure being devised to ensure that there are always two exits from the building.

The risk of accidental injury to children is being minimised by the exercise of good procedures, including staff undertaking daily visual risk assessments to safeguard children from potential hazards, especially on a frosty morning. Children are learning about such dangers and how to keep themselves safe, such as by being reminded by staff to be careful when going outside as the steps may be slippery following frost in the morning. Children are learning about fire safety and know the emergency evacuation procedures through staff practising drills with them. Staff plan activities for the children to learn about safety awareness, with special visitors such as a Police Officer maintaining their interest in learning to keep themselves safe.

Children stay safe because staff operate clear child safety procedures, which are shared with parents. Children are being safeguarded as staff have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and are aware of the appropriate procedures to be followed. The detailed policies for non-collection also contribute to ensuring that children are fully safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have a very busy time at the setting. They are amicably playing and learning alongside their peers through the provision of a varied range of worthwhile activities to help their developmental progress. Staff are using the Foundation Stage framework to ensure that all children are being provided with age and stage appropriate play opportunities, by organising various activities in different areas of the premises. Staff are aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, although do not consistently plan or assess the outcomes for children under three to influence their development.

Children's confidence and self-esteem are being promoted through daily routines. They are acquiring new knowledge and skills by watching what happens when they mix ingredients to make dough, before exploring the malleable material with their hands or by using simple tools. They are receiving plenty of praise and encouragement from staff to promote their positive attitudes to future learning. They demonstrate their natural curiosity as learners by sharing their ideas when creating their faces on paper plates.

Children have opportunities to develop their language skills with each other through staff talking with them, giving them time to think through their ideas and to develop their thinking and listening skills. All children enjoy singing rhymes, while some enjoy listening to stories to further promote their language development. Children are developing an understanding of right from wrong and are forming positive relationships through staff setting consistent boundaries and appropriately supporting them. Most children have good levels of concentration

and some can use initiative, for example, when going to the drinking jug for water when their water jug was empty, to enable them to mix flour into dough.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how young children learn through play. Key workers support children's progress towards the early learning goals, monitoring their progress by using the stepping stones. Staff use long, medium and short term planning for the benefit of children. The short term planning includes the learning goals, but is not consistently linked to the other areas of learning. Systems for recording children's progress are in place and assessments enable staff to plan activities for their development. However, the identification of children's next steps for learning based on what they know and can do is not being clearly identified. Staff work together as a team by discussing what children can do, but the adaptations of planned learning objectives are not yet being effectively implemented. Potentially, children are not being effectively challenged when their differing levels of attainment are not being considered in planning. For example, staff are not pre-planning key questions at different levels or following through and extending a child's ideas. Information about children's educational development is shared with parents and carers through open access to key workers' files.

Children have access to a varied range of chosen resources to support their learning and play. Some staff ask open-ended questions to encourage children's language development. Children are able to consolidate their learning as the weekly planned activities are repeated each day. A varied and suitable range of teaching methods are being used, including encouraging children to try and by involving all in large group activities.

Children are forming good relationships with each other and members of staff, such as by making room at activities and by learning to share and to care for each other. They are enjoying what they do and the majority are able to sustain their interest in a range of activities. Their self-esteem and confidence are increasing through proudly seeking out others to show them their finished creations.

Children are developing their skills across all aspects of communication, language and literacy. They enjoy joining in with their favourite rhymes, for example, 'twinkle twinkle little star'. They recognise their names when they self-register. More able children can write their names and correctly form letters, although some staff are writing children's names in a mixture of lower and upper case for them to copy. Children enjoy joining in with repetitive story phrases, but staff are telling stories to the whole group of children, resulting in some losing interest when they cannot see the book.

Children's enquiring minds are being challenged with mathematical problems. They are able to solve problems across practical activities, for example, when playing dice games or completing puzzles. They are developing a satisfactory understanding of mathematical ideas and concepts, with more able children being able to count to 10 and beyond. Opportunities for them to build on their calculation skills are being encouraged and number rhymes and songs, for example, 'five flying saucers', help them to consolidate previous learning. They are beginning to observe shapes when using wooden blocks, with some confidently naming the shapes, while others knowing the colours. They show an interest in space when playing with bricks and cars, for example, assessing whether a car will go under a bridge.

Children are learning about the world they live in through staff planning a varied range of practical experiences. Some children are showing an interest in the computer and are learning how to click the mouse. Others are realising the purpose for tools, such as why glue and a spreader are used to make items stick on their faces and that scissors can cut tissue paper into different sizes and shapes. Children plant mustard and cress seeds and are beginning to understand that they need to be watered to ensure that they grow. They observe the changes in the life cycle of frogs by watching the changes in a tadpole's body.

Children are developing new skills through having many opportunities to persevere in repeating some actions, such as rolling down the grassed bank. They are keen to explore, experiment and refine their movements and actions, such as when using the 'peddle roller' or when throwing a ball. They show confidence and self-esteem when riding wheeled toys and very successfully manoeuvring around each other in the enclosed outdoor area. Children's confidence is growing by learning to take care for themselves when pouring their own drinks and when putting on their coats.

Children are able to be creative by expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, role play and imaginative play. They thoroughly enjoy listening to music from around the world and exploring the different sounds of many musical instruments. They explore different materials and colours when printing with potatoes and carrots. They have many opportunities to develop their emerging writing skills through the provision of paper and pencils in the role play area, although staff do not consistently encourage children to identify their own creations. Children act out African stories, such as Kuomboka and enjoy being 'the King banging the drum'.

Staff work closely as a team, praising and encouraging children to develop their personal independence and to support their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are being very sensitively settled into the setting according to their individual needs, with plenty of cuddles and reassurance from a very caring staff team. Staff work with parents and carers to meet individual children's needs and to ensure that they are fully included in the setting. Staff seek information from parents and carers, for example, cultures and home languages, to specifically meet children's individual needs. Children with English as an additional language enjoy singing songs and rhymes to help them tune into the rhymes and sounds of English. These children are sometimes being supported by a student speaking their mother tongue to reassure them.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are greatly valued, respected and fully integrated into the setting. They are effectively supported by all staff being involved and aware of the procedures for identifying, assessing and making provision for them. Staff work closely with the Area Senco advisor and take a multi-agency approach for the best interests of the child. All children are learning to use sign language, becoming competent to sing and sign songs together. Some children confidently understand the signs before they can say the words to avoid frustration and to ensure that their communication skills are being developed. Staff use 'I can' and pictorial timetabled charts with children to help their understanding of the routines of the day.

Children are developing a good sense of belonging by seeing some of their own work being displayed on walls. They are developing an understanding of the wider society by staff

introducing them to different local people, such as a nurse and firefighters. They are beginning to know about their own and other people's cultures, for example, by inviting the parents to celebrate cultural festivals, such as Diwali.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children confidently speak and relate to staff, visitors and other children. They play happily together and the majority understand the clear boundaries. They share the different emotional hand puppets and are encouraged to make them all happy by clapping their hands. Children understand the clear boundaries and are also well-mannered, for example, they say 'excuse me'. Children's desirable behaviour and achievements are frequently being acknowledged by staff through praise, stickers and certificates to further enhance their good behaviour, self-esteem and confidence.

Children's welfare and care are being well promoted through staff working in partnership with parents and carers to meet their individual needs. Parents and carers receive clear information about the setting. They are informed of the setting's complaints procedure, including details of the regulator and how they can express any concerns. Information about what their children are eating is available through the snack menus being displayed in the entrance foyer. Parents and carers work closely with their children's key worker, who know the children well, to ensure that they are all treated as individuals.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Staff gather written information from parents and carers during settling-in periods to ensure that they know children's starting points. Parents and carers receive clear information about the educational provision through a prospectus and newsletters. Parents and carers are able to be involved with some of their children's learning activities at home, with all children having a bag to take home books to look at and to read with them. Weekly plans are displayed in the entrance foyer, but parents and carers are not always being informed about their children's targeted next steps of learning, linked to the stepping stones, to enable them to fully support their child's learning at home. Children's developmental folders are freely available to parents and carers at any time and their key workers will always discuss any concerns to ensure that individual children's educational needs are being met.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are being fully safeguarded through staff undergoing rigorous vetting procedures to ensure that children are being cared for by suitable adults. There are sound procedures to ensure that children do not have unsupervised access to persons who have not been vetted, such as students and volunteers. The manager and her staff have a strong commitment to furthering their professional development through training and regular appraisals.

Currently no children under two years attend the setting. Children aged from two to four years are therefore being cared for in three rooms, although they all come together for snack times, group times and outdoor play. This sometimes results in group sizes exceeding 26 children, which potentially compromises their care, learning and play, in addition to resources and some activities not fully supporting all children's individual needs.

The required documentation is in place for the safe day-to-day management and to promote children's welfare and safety. Staff demonstrate sound knowledge of the policies and procedures. The operational plan is being reviewed and updated to link with the outcomes of 'Every Child Matters' and the National Standards.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager of the setting receives support from the registered provider and delegates the planning of activities to some of her staff team. They plan the weekly activities for all staff to deliver and they are aware of the aims for children's weekly learning. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, working well together to ensure that the setting runs smoothly. However, the weekly activity planning is not always being monitored by the management team to ensure that all activities are being adapted to challenge and support children to achieve their next steps of learning.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the registered provider was given two recommendations; to ensure that children's arrival and departure times were recorded and to ensure that records relating to day care were made readily accessible on the premises and available for inspection at all times (this referred to public liability insurance). An accurate register is now maintained of children's arrival and departure times to ensure awareness of the number of children on the premises at any one time. Therefore, children's welfare and safety are being protected regarding ratios and emergency evacuations. The required documentation, including public liability insurance, is now readily available for the safe day-to-day management, to promote children's welfare and safety and to provide reassurance to parents.

At the last nursery educational inspection, there were no significant weaknesses to report, although the registered provider was asked to consider ways that children could further practise their emergent writing. Children now have several opportunities to develop their emergent writing skills through the provision of paper and pencils in the role play area and sometimes chalk in the outdoor area for mark-making.

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 satisfactory.

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 parents sign the medication record book to acknowledge that their children have been administered medication
- ensure that group sizes do not exceed 26 children.

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 the short term planning consistently includes key questions and how the planning can be adapted for the differing needs of individuals or groups of children
- review the planning cycle to ensure that activities are adapted to challenge and support children to achieve their next steps of learning
- ensure that parents are informed about their children's targeted next steps of learning linked to the stepping stones.

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