

Croyland Children's Centre and Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY278767
Inspection date	18 March 2008
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Registered person	The Governing Body of Croyland Early Years Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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

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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?

Croyland Children's Centre and Nursery School opened in 2004. The original nursery opened on site in 1942 and operates from a redeveloped school building on a shared site with Croyland Primary School in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. All children have shared access to a secure, enclosed outside area. A maximum of 110 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year.

There are currently 114 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 89 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports 39 children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 18 staff. Of these, 14 staff, including the head teacher hold appropriate teaching and early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children stay healthy because staff take robust steps to protect them from infection. They clearly understand and consistently implement excellent health and hygiene procedures. The premises are maintained in an immaculately clean state, cloths are labelled and tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray to prevent cross-contamination. The kitchen areas are extremely well organised and kept clean. Staff wear latex gloves and protective aprons when dealing with any bodily fluids and health and safety monitoring is intentionally rigorous.

Staff provide excellent role models to the children on hygiene practice. Staff consistently weave learning about the management of germs and personal hygiene into the daily routine so that it becomes second nature to children. For example, staff wash their own hands and encourage the children to copy their example. Picture notices remind older children to wash their hands after visiting the toilet. Staff gently prompt younger children about wiping their noses and encourage children to learn appropriate etiquette, putting their hands to their mouths when coughing and sneezing. Children access tissues independently and a bin for disposing of the soiled article is provided nearby.

Children actively learn about healthy living through the daily routines. The children show a marked awareness of a range of healthy practices with regard to eating, sleeping and hygiene. Young children are able to rest when they need to in an appropriate quiet room equipped with individualised bedding and mattresses. 'The Den' is another generally quiet room with a sofa and soft cushions where children can rest in accordance with their needs, feeling safe, secure and comforted at vulnerable times of the day. For example, when sessional children go home at the end of the morning, the setting is very conscious of children's feelings. Staff try to gather the full day children where they will not be upset at seeing other parents coming to collect their children.

Children are extremely well-cared for if they have an accident or become ill. They receive appropriate treatment in a medical emergency because most staff hold suitable and current first aid qualifications. The first aid boxes are readily accessible because clear signage identifies their location. The contents are checked regularly. Staff record accidents appropriately, include the relevant details and monitor these rigorously as part of the risk assessment process. Parents receive written advice and notification of any suspected head injury. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and relevant literature and information on childhood diseases is kept for reference and is made available to parents and carers.

Children enjoy free-flow access to a vast range of outdoor play experiences on a daily basis. Open garden space and covered outside areas means that children are able to access the full curriculum outdoors. Block-paved pathways and grassy banks are set out with an imaginative range of toys and resources which provide appropriate challenge and enable children to develop their physical skills. For example, children experiment, explore and play with cars, tricycles, bikes, balls and stilts. Older children develop hand-eye co-ordination as they play bat and ball games with staff. They dig in the sand and climb and balance on play equipment. The younger children enjoy 'Going on a Bear Hunt' through the newly constructed woodland path, 'swishy swashing' through shredded paper and searching for bears in the pop-up tent cave. They squeal with glee as they jump in the puddle on the tuff spot and splash water everywhere.

Children enjoy meals and snacks that are well presented, healthy and balanced. The centre cook ensures that children have nutritious foods appropriate for their growth and development and prepares meals on site from fresh ingredients. Any individual dietary needs of children are catered for. The cook becomes actively involved with planned work on food. Photographs show children exploring and tasting foods. For example, the two-year-olds experiment with raw and cooked potato and cabbage as part of introductory work to planning, shopping, preparing, cooking and eating a meal of mashed potato, cabbage and sausages with gravy for the whole nursery. The children have already planted carrots and other vegetables in the cultivation beds in the gardens and will be watering, harvesting and preparing their own vegetables later in the year. Children do not become thirsty or hungry because they have constant, free and independent access to fresh water and snacks at the class café. Children follow the pictorial guidance for hand washing, self-register their names, help themselves to drinks and select snack from raw vegetables and fruit.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

This exceptionally well-run and effectively monitored nursery gives extremely high priority to children's safety and welfare. Security systems are robust and thorough and focussed risk assessments ensure a safe environment. The nursery is accessed through a secure door, which has a bell to alert staff to the arrival of visitors. Every unknown adult is properly required to produce an identity document before being admitted to the premises and staff rigorously record all visitors to the setting. Areas where children are cared for are accessed via a keypad entry system and the code is rigorously protected by staff. Every courtesy is extended to visitors with regard to their health, safety and welfare. For example, staff point out the emergency procedures and the assembly point. Children feel safe because staff introduce visitors and explain the purpose of their presence in simple terms which they can understand. Staff know what to do in the event of an emergency and practise their evacuation plan with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Every eventuality has been considered with regard to danger from fire. Fire procedures are displayed with clear, simple instructions.

Staff help keep children safe in the nursery because they fully understand and comply with health and safety requirements. Supervision is exceptional. For example, generous adult to child ratios allow flexibility in preparing and organising activities and the environment. Before outside play, the staff fully prepare the garden for the children and complete their risk assessment. This supports prompt garden access and ensures that children can move outdoors without having to wait. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting because staff give good explanations as to why, for example, it is not a good idea to play in the corridor outside the classroom. Children learn to take care of their environment. Staff asked the children to pick up books which had fallen on the floor and replace them on the shelf, supplying the explanation that we must take care of books because they are valuable.

Children are genuinely and warmly welcomed and well-cared for in an extremely attractive classroom environment which has been made suitably safe and secure. Staff set the rooms out thoughtfully to reflect differing types of play and to facilitate children's choice and developing independence. The range of resources is extensive and storage space is at a premium. However, innovative storage solutions mean that everything is arranged to facilitate children's independent access wherever possible. Throughout the nursery school, everything is exceedingly well labelled, colour-coded and exceptionally well organised. Resources are labelled with pictures and words and grouped into areas of learning. The staff put up posters and pictures to make the room attractive for children and set out the equipment enticingly before the children arrive. Bright

displays of children's work and recent photographs enhance the environment and reinforce and consolidate topical learning in an age-appropriate manner. Interactive labelling of displays ensures that print is given excellent prominence in the environment and provides effective support for children's emergent reading skills.

Children's welfare is robustly safeguarded because they are protected by trained, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this well-organised and managed setting and comprehensive recording of pre-existing injuries, protects the children and staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy and make sustained progress in learning, leisure and personal development because the staff are confident, enthusiastic and knowledgeable in their childcare practice. Children of all ages are happy to be left by their parents and carers, thoroughly enjoy their time at this nursery school and have lots of fun. One classroom area is set out specifically for the younger children. Toys and activities are set out enticingly on the tables for children to select what interests them and staff gently follow the children's lead. For example, when some two-year-olds look at the book corner, a staff member asks if they would like her to read them a story. Children make excellent progress in the development of their basic language skills because of the positive and consistent interaction of staff in conversations and play. Staff sit on the floor at the children's level to encourage the children to explore the contents of pieces of cut turf. Magnifiers and non-fiction books are close to hand to support the experience. Photographs show the under threes at play, involved in an extensive range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and overall learning. Young children become confident to make choices, decisions, explore and investigate. They relate well to each other, to adults and to visitors to the setting because they feel secure and stimulated.

Staff confidently implement the spirit of the 'Birth to three matters' guidance and actively use this framework as the basis for their planning and assessment for children under three years old. Parents are asked to complete a 'getting to know you' sheet, which seeks insightful information enabling appropriate care to be given. Information gained from observation forms the basis of competent baseline assessment. This information provides staff with a clear starting point upon which meaningful planning for future learning can be based. Children make smooth and happy transitions from the under three's group to the older group.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children actively participate and become totally engrossed in an extensive range of stimulating activities which absorb their interest and present high levels of challenge to progress their learning. The staff demonstrate an exceptionally competent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver a superb and varied programme of play-based activities which provide a clear balance across all six areas of learning. An excellent balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Highly innovative teaching, rigorous assessment systems and well-planned and executed activities ensure children make rapid progress through the stepping stones, given their age, ability and starting points.

A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child-led learning allows children to learn at their own pace. Planning is highly effective because the staff have ownership of their system. A topic plan outlines what they want children to learn and how children will be enabled to learn. It sets out criteria for determining how staff will know who has learnt what and identifies what learning needs to take place next. Staff are keenly aware of how individual children learn and skilfully adapt activities to build on children's interests and spontaneous events. Staff take every opportunity to affirm children's achievements, consolidate existing knowledge and then lead children on to the next stage. They consistently deliver a diverse range of inspirational practical age-appropriate activities. This motivates children's interest and desire to learn.

Children's work is valued by staff for the learning process and is not governed by the end product. Meticulous attention is paid to record keeping, reviewing and developing practice to meet the learning needs of all children. Staff set aims and targets for each child on the planning sheets. Observations are noted daily through the session and transferred into children's assessment folders. All observations are dated and noted against the stepping stones under the six areas of learning. Extensive photographic evidence is kept. The assessment folders enable children's progress to be tracked through the stepping stones and staff can easily see what needs to be planned to progress learning.

Staff use clear and highly skilled teaching techniques which they confidently adapt to suit the various ages of children at this setting. Excellent staff deployment ensures that activities flow at an appropriately purposeful pace one after the other. Staff are constantly renewing the nursery environment with stimulating and motivating activities and resources. Children feel secure with the daily routine. Children respond to new activities and challenge with lively interest. They move from one activity to another, showing excellent concentration and focus. Older children initiate activities and invite the inspector to play with the chocolate-scented play dough. Children demonstrate a marked ability to manipulate the tools, including a mouli-grater requiring two handed co-ordination.

Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops learning through play. Excellent support is given to the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills. Children learn to be independent in their self-care because staff take the time and trouble to show children how to do things for themselves. For example, when getting dressed to go into the garden, staff show children how to put on their shoes on the right feet. Outstanding teaching supports the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Photographs and displays explain why print is important in the environment and shows parents and carers how they can support their children's learning at home. Work on display shows that children begin to form recognisable letters and attribute meaning to their marks. Excellent, highly skilled use of visual aids brings meaningful learning to simple rhymes and songs for older children. For example, a glove with five currant buns on the fingers is used to illustrate the decreasing number of buns left in the shop as the children buy one at a time. Children are actively involved in the calculation as they work out how many are left. Plans and observations show that children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems through practical and meaningful everyday experiences.

Children are highly inquisitive about the world around them. Children comment upon and ask questions about the natural world as they examine living things to find out more about them. Children become familiar with technology, playing in the 'office' using a keyboard, mobile telephones and pens and paper. Photographs and planning indicate that children undertake a

vast range of diverse activities to learn about other cultures and festivals. Children develop their large and small muscles, using tools with increasing skill, and move freely and with confidence. They experiment with different ways of moving, using imagination and concentration. They have a good awareness of how their bodies work and healthy eating. The garden area is well resourced and used imaginatively and with interest by the children. Children use a range of malleable materials and effect change to the materials using a range of tools and equipment. Children explore colour, shape and texture using a wide range of media. They show good imagination when moving to music, and have a strong appreciation of songs and rhyme. Children engage in role play based on their own first hand experience, using materials imaginatively and engaging one another within their play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are given particularly sensitive attention at the start and the end of the day because staff are exceptionally aware of their needs, thoughts and feelings. Feeling valued and secure, they become highly motivated, independent learners who develop an exemplary awareness of others and this helps them to join in, take responsibility and play a truly productive part in the setting. Highly effective planning of experiences and activities helps children to develop their personal and social skills. Children relish the opportunity to take part in relevant, appropriate and enjoyable activities that develop their understanding of their own and other cultures.

Staff make sure that children are provided with a wide range of anti-discriminatory and anti-bias play materials and resources which promotes a growing awareness of others. Children learn about different lifestyles, disabilities and cultural practices which means that children's awareness of the wider world is actively promoted and enables them to develop a positive attitude to others. Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of differing needs and they provide sensitive support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Staff work well with professionals and parents to make sure that all families are fully welcomed into the nursery school. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision. Any children who have English as an additional language find plentiful pictorial signage to guide their acquisition of English and the staff and children are proficient in the use of singing and signing.

The nursery school creates an environment where children, parents and staff value, respect and care for each other. The principles within the behaviour management policy help to build a happy and relaxed atmosphere, where staff give direction and correction to children in a positive way. For example, staff say 'Keep the sand in the sand tray please', in preference to 'Don't drop the sand on the floor'. Rules are displayed at child height. Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Therefore, children are well behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural is fostered.

Children are extremely well supported through a genuine partnership with parents and carers and relationships at all levels are exemplary. Parents and carers are kept exceptionally well informed about general care and educational matters through daily discussion, newsletters, photographic displays of children's work and notice boards. Narrative explanations of the learning gained from activities means that parents have outstanding information about the learning of their children. For example, a photographic display shows how the children worked

together as a team to make 'Little Bear's birthday surprise'. The first visit to the nursery school is the starting point of the staff and family working together to share information about cultures, home languages, interests and specific needs. All families receive a home visit from staff before the children begin attendance. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and are well supported by staff during the settling-in process. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations.

Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided, specifically mentioning the nurturing, 'home from home' atmosphere and the commitment of staff. Staff encourage parents to actively contribute their observations from home towards individual assessment records on a regular basis. Therefore, children benefit from a two-way sharing of information between parents and staff to enhance their learning. This underpins their progress in the nursery school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is outstanding.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care, learning and welfare is significantly enhanced by exceptional organisation. All required documentation is in place and readily accessible; registration systems are suitably robust and well thought-out procedures ensure the efficient and safe management of the nursery school. Regularly reviewed and amended, comprehensive policies and procedures underpin excellent professional practice. The loyal and hard-working staff team are well qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They demonstrate a genuine commitment to ongoing training to continually update their skills, knowledge and ability to meet the children's needs effectively. Imaginative, thoughtful planning and sincere effort goes into preparing the learning environment each day so that all adults can concentrate solely on working with the children. Staff follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide consistent, effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes highly positive outcomes for children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The staff team are well supported by the actively involved head teacher who oversees all aspects of the management of the nursery. She is able to assess strengths and weaknesses very well. The team are fully committed to ensuring that all children receive the highest quality of care and education and this is supported through consistent review and monitoring of their practice, through regular supervision meetings, personal development training plans and appraisals. This motivates staff and contributes to the dynamic ethos of the whole team. Senior staff share their expert practice with the staff who all work together to ensure that teaching methods take full account of the children's individual needs and the diverse ways in which children learn. The training programme is carefully planned to meet the individual and collective needs of staff. This ensures that staff are able to deliver a highly successfully early education programme for all children.

The head teacher has a clear vision for the continued development of the setting and ensures that everyone involved has clearly designated roles and responsibilities. Staff are able to give their time and energy to the children who enjoy their time at this friendly and welcoming provision. The staff have ownership of their planning and assessment systems, which are manageable and achievable and thereby secure and progress children's learning. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of day care, two recommendations were raised.

The setting was asked to ensure that the baby unit area has adequate ventilation and to ensure that the records of any accidents are signed by the parent. The setting no longer offers care for babies and this space is now used for under threes. During the inspection, no issues or concerns were raised with regard to the use of this area. The accident records meet requirements and are signed by parents. This ensures children's safety and maintains records essential for the safe management of the provision. The actions taken have made a significant improvement and a highly positive impact upon the quality and standards of day care for children.

This is the first inspection of nursery education.

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