

Little Pirates Neighbourhood Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY261001
Inspection date	11 February 2008
Inspector	Janette Elaina Lockwood
Setting Address	The Gateway Academy, St Chad's Road, Tilbury, Essex, RM18 8LH
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Registered person	Thurrock 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 good. 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?

Little Pirates Neighbourhood Nursery is run by Thurrock Council Home School Link. It opened in 1998 and operates from a purpose built premises situated on the grounds of Gateway Academy in the centre of Tilbury. A maximum of 76 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 for 50 weeks of the year. Shorter sessions are available from 09.00 to 11.30 or 12.30 to 15.00. All children share open access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 88 children aged from birth to under 8 years on roll. Of these, 28 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. The nursery supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 23 members staff. Of these, 20 hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification and five are working towards a further qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The setting is clean and hygienic with staff following good procedures to ensure children are kept healthy, for example, following daily cleaning duties for each area. Staff have good routines for preventing cross-infection when changing nappies and provide children with individual clean bedding when they sleep. These measures help minimise the spread of germs between children.

Staff regularly encourage children to learn about healthy living through different activities and children are helped to be independent in hand washing, for example, with low-level sinks, soap and paper towels. There are simple posters to remind children of good hand washing procedures and paper tissues are kept at the children's level to help them remember to wipe their own noses. In this way, children are beginning to learn some healthy practices for themselves.

The setting holds clear information on communicable diseases and parents are made fully aware of the setting's sickness policy. Staff know children's health needs through gathering information from their parents and there are close links with Health Visitors. Most staff are first aid trained and there are well written procedures for managing accidents and sickness, including how to talk to a child if they are unwell, which links into the setting's well-being scale of how children are feeling. Consequently, children are cared for sensitively if they are ill or have an accident.

Staff provide children with a nutritious and healthy diet which takes account of any dietary needs. There is a cook employed who prepares the meals with fresh ingredients so children are provided with appetising and nourishing meals. In addition, the staff follow food safety procedures so food related risks to children are minimised. Staff work in partnership with parents with weaning and encourage all children to try new foods. They also give parents guidelines on what to provide in lunch boxes to ensure children have healthy packed lunches. Parents are made aware of what foods their children have eaten through daily information sheets and menus. As a result, children are very well nourished and their meal times are happy and sociable occasions.

Children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the session and can pour the drinks themselves to learn to respond to their own thirst and keep hydrated.

Staff encourage children to develop their physical skills by providing free access to the garden area for most of the day. Outside they can climb up the large climbing apparatus and slide down the slide, helping develop their large muscle skills, or use scooters and bikes to help with their balance and co-ordination. Staff plan activities outside such as using water and large brushes to 'paint' and use buckets and beanbags to practice aiming skills. The staff ensure the children are safe in the sunshine and monitor them in extreme weather to make sure they are not too hot or cold.

A good range of activities are also planned for children indoors including learning to climb the carpeted stairs up to the 'dens' where there are quiet activities. In addition, staff encourage children to dress themselves independently. Babies are encouraged to become mobile and there is suitable equipment for their physical needs such as a large sofa to pull themselves up on. As a result, all children have opportunities to develop their physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The nursery premises are purpose built to provide a child-friendly environment for children, for example, there are low-level sinks and toilets to help children become independent. There are three main bases for children with access to a creative/messy play room, a dining area and a fully enclosed and safe garden so children benefit from plenty of space for activities to take place simultaneously. The premises also provides a suite of offices and a training room. In two of the main base rooms for children, there are raised platforms accessed by carpeted staircases. These are fully enclosed with safety barriers at the top and children enjoy quiet activities in these 'dens' as well as using them for sleep times.

A wide range of very good quality equipment is available for children to use, most of which is stored within children's reach on low-level shelves so they can access it freely to make their own choices in their play.

The staff carry out a wide range of risk assessments, use accident records in identifying hazards and follow health and safety guidelines, for example, when taking children out of the premises. Regular fire drills are carried out and staff explain why these take place to highlight the dangers with children so they understand how to help keep themselves safe in an emergency.

Children can freely access the foyer where they hang their coats, opening and closing a door by themselves. This area has a door to the adult toilet and kitchen as well as a doorway to an area where parents store their children's buggies. Apart from the risk of children accessing the toilet and kitchen whilst unsupervised, the children may also have access to carrier bags which parents sometimes hang on their child's coat peg. Furthermore, the stored buggies may pose a risk to children. Consequently, there are potential hazards to children when they are unsupervised in the foyer.

Staff provide children with frequent opportunities to learn to keep themselves safe, for example, playing a game of road safety on a mat with cars. In addition, they generally remind children about simple safety rules and ask them questions to make them think which in turn, helps reiterate what they know about staying safe.

The setting has very good child protection policies which are written in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures (LSCB) to help protect children. All local contacts are detailed and there is a nominated person to contact in the setting who takes responsibility for referrals. All staff have had child protection training and are aware of their responsibilities regarding the protection of children and know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about them. There is information to access regarding possible signs and symptoms which would raise concerns about children and children's general well-being is monitored regularly. As a result, children are safeguarded in the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are highly aware of each child's individual needs and use their knowledge of the child using 'possible lines of direction' (PLODS) and the Effective Early Learning project (EELS) to plan successful activities for children. This includes the use of a child involvement scale, looking closely at the levels children are working at and finding out and identifying which types of activities interest each child. This links into a well-being scale, to help staff accurately identify

and record how happy a child is and whether they feel emotionally connected to the nursery. As a result, children are cared for exceptionally well in the setting as they are treated as individuals and are encouraged to develop at their own pace.

The setting offers very good quality after school and holiday care for children where staff instinctively understand the needs of older children and understand the importance of letting them develop their own activities. Children are actively encouraged to help plan for the following week through discussion and bringing forward their ideas. For example, children in the holiday club plan to make a café and thoroughly enjoy using their reading and writing skills to design signage and make pretend money. They are inspired to produce their own menus, work out prices and change as well as give each other roles and responsibilities. The staff skilfully help children to cook food such as cookies to share with the rest of the children in the nursery so they take an active part in the nursery life.

Children are confident to request their favourite activities in the after school club and some children prefer to play quietly on their own to relax after their busy day. Others engage in their homework if their parents request it but there is always time for children to chat to staff and their peers about their day at school helping them to develop very good relationships with others.

Children aged under three years are cared for extremely well by staff who expertly follow the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Using this system, staff make regular worthwhile observations of children and complete daily sheets to show parents what their children have been doing during the day. Staff successfully involve parents in the children's development through regular exchanges of information and there are very good settling in procedures to ensure children develop a strong sense of belonging. There are cleverly thought out activities that interest young children and babies such as heuristic play using exciting items to unpack from a treasure basket. Children highly benefit from cosy times to share books or snuggle into staff to sing songs together helping children to feel a deeper sense of trust. Staff are exceptionally caring and respond to each child as an individual so that children's developmental and care needs are met effectively.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an extensive knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage, because all staff have opportunities to access courses and in service training is frequently provided. Staff also become highly familiar with the early learning goals and the stepping stones by closely following the curriculum guidance and the effective early learning project so children's needs are met.

Staff skilfully build on what children already know by asking relevant questions and are sensitive and aware of when a child needs more time to explore or develop a skill and as a result, children's thinking is extended. Staff use their extensive knowledge of how children learn when presenting them with new experiences or information. Furthermore, they recognise when repetition has ceased to be purposeful and that the child needs a change in direction or adult help to develop further and consequently children confidently develop new skills. Regular worthwhile observations are made and children's achievements are recognised and celebrated, which encourages children to continue to learn. As a result, children are confident and demonstrate good dispositions and attitudes towards learning.

Staff provide a wonderful learning environment that closely reflects the community the children come from and the wider world. The materials used reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping, helping children to view themselves and others positively. In addition, the staff fulfil the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. These measures help children learn about the world around them and develop positive attitudes towards others.

Staff use their very good plans to influence the play environment by ensuring children's individual skills are developed within it. They plan the curriculum to build upon familiar activities to stretch and develop children and introduce new skills in meaningful situations. The setting follows a curriculum policy to ensure good practice and the inclusion of all children helping all children to make very good progress towards the early learning goals.

Plans very clearly illustrate what children are intended to learn and what teaching methods are to be used to adapt them to suit children of different ages who learn at different rates or who have particular needs. For example, teacher, child or peer led, free choice or adult directed. The differentiation results in the inclusion of all children. The planning includes the use of the outdoor area so that children who wish to spend more time outdoors are receiving the same quality activities and extending their learning in the fresh air. Staff challenge children and expect the most from them providing plenty of opportunities to encourage children to think and to demonstrate what they know and understand.

Staff constantly observe children to ensure their needs are being met and that planning builds upon and develops all children supporting their development of new skills. Through close observation staff learn about children's individual learning needs and have high expectations of them. Staff use a wide range of methods to gain the information they need for children's evaluations and assessments. These identify what staff know about children and then in turn influence the planning so children's individual learning needs are met.

Staff encourage children to develop their personal, social and emotional skills by providing activities which allow children to become confident learners. Children keep busy and show motivation and interest in what is available because staff plan a worthwhile and interesting learning environment and support children effectively in their play. They show their growing independence in choosing activities and take some real and appropriate responsibilities, for example, helping to lay the table.

Children know they can ask staff questions, because they are helped to voice their feelings and have their views listened to. This in turn encourages them to ask questions of one another helping them make comparisons and demonstrate their sense of belonging in the setting. Staff use effective methods to help children to feel confident to speak in a group, for example, passing around a telephone or other object so they know it is their turn to talk. The learning environment is text rich and some of the captions for pictures have been written by children.

There is always a table with mark-making tools which draws the children towards it and staff follow the children's ideas on how they wish to use these, for example, in drawing and emergent writing. In addition, staff strategically place pencils and paper in other areas of play to encourage children to see writing as purposeful. As children develop a love of books, they are encouraged to look at the words and staff begin to use a popular system to help them link sounds and letters. Children also begin to recognise numbers as labels and for counting with numerals in resources, around the room and outside. They enjoy sorting items and adding and subtracting

using their fingers, people or toys. Children count confidently, both when asked and spontaneously in their play, for example, counting the candles on a pretend cake.

Children learn about capacity through using sand and water and weigh ingredients during cooking activities, noticing how ingredients change when mixed with others, or are heated and cooled, for example, when making bread. The staff extend these activities by taking children to visit a bakery and green grocers to find out about their local area. Their knowledge and understanding of the world encompasses learning about the wider world, talking about how to care for the environment and looking at outer space. Children talk about the shape of the moon and make telescopes, learning about technology in addition to the everyday equipment they use such as the karaoke machine and the computer.

Staff encourage children to be creative through providing free access to the messy/creative room where there is an abundant supply of materials for children to use to express themselves. Staff show children interesting new techniques such as bubble printing, collage and blowing paint so children can experiment and produce their own work. When using different materials, children use their senses, exploring how materials feel or smell and how they can be used. Staff provide many outlets for children's imagination throughout the setting by skilfully providing props and role play items for children to act out different scenarios.

Children have frequent opportunities to develop their fine motor skills through using interesting items such as a hole punch, split pins and tags in their creations. They learn to be competent in using cutlery when eating and pour their own drinks helping develop their hand/eye co-ordination. Staff encourage children to learn about their bodies and provide interesting activities such as looking at x-rays and talking about how food affects their bodies so they learn how to take care of their health.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Staff actively encourage children to talk about their homes and families and compare the festivals they celebrate, for example, discussing what Christmas means to them. Children make solid friendships and know how to make up after their differences, without adult intervention, following the instilled codes of acceptable behaviour. Children are given frequent well planned opportunities to talk about their feelings and staff use different methods to help them find ways to do this, for example, using good quality story books, persona dolls or puppets. Consequently, children are able to develop their confidence and emotional well-being.

The setting follows a clear equal opportunity policy which helps staff provide an inclusive play environment which is rich with posters showing people from different cultures and backgrounds. Children are helped to understand diversity in their community and to celebrate their own traditions as well as the cultures of others.

There are consistent reminders of different festivals to celebrate. Children have access to very good books and take part in activities relating to a variety of festivals and celebrations from around the world. Furthermore, there are resources and materials that reflect people with disabilities so that children learn about and appreciate similarities and differences in society. There is an inclusion and diversity policy which details how the setting will ensure the individual needs of children and their families are met so that children can settle well and become a valued member of the group.

Staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and instil in children an feeling of mutual respect and encouragement. Through this children gain self-discipline, self-esteem and learn the simple rules which they demonstrate by showing how they work in harmony with one another. Children share, take turns and understand that unacceptable behaviours will be challenged and staff avoid creating situations where attention is gained by undesirable behaviour. Staff are consistent and give fair boundaries, helping children to learn their own strategies for overcoming conflict. As a result, children's behaviour is exemplary.

Staff have an excellent understanding of issues and care needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). They help identify children's needs through a number of ways, for example, through parental concern observing communication and interaction difficulties. The co-ordinator in the setting keeps a register of children receiving support and ensures the setting is liaising fully with parents, advising and supporting other staff and overseeing the day to day operation of the policy. She checks that observations are carried out, records and play plans are kept up-to-date and attends multi-agency meetings, all the while working closely in consultation with parents. As a result, children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs met effectively.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents of children receiving funding for early education receive high quality information about the setting and how it operates. In this way, parents have good opportunities to gain an understanding of the setting's practices and how their children will be taught. The provision provides parents with an abundance of relevant and clear information about the early learning goals so children can share their learning with them. For example, parents are invited to regular workshops each half term to give them opportunities to learn about the early years curriculum and how young children learn in the setting and at home. These workshops have included language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. In addition, the clear planning is displayed throughout the setting so parents can see what their children are intended to learn. Consequently, children are able to share what they do in the setting with their parents and make links between their home and setting.

The staff keep parents highly informed of their children's progress and uphold the ethos of working in partnership with parents to enhance children's learning. This is encouraged through very well organised formal meetings where they can see their child's records, speak to the key worker and add their comments to their records. Staff share children's successes and achievements each day with parents and offer them regular access to any written records as well as regular discussions on their progress. The parents are consulted about the times and venues of the meetings so all parents can be included. As a result, children can share what they know with their parents.

Parents are encouraged to engage in inspirational learning activities at home with their children and are given ideas as to how to achieve this so that children can learn effectively with their parents at home. Staff actively seek the views of parents and value their observations about their child's learning, whatever form these may take and incorporate them into their very good practice. This ensures staff work with parents at all times to help them to plan the next steps in learning and meet the children's learning needs.

Parents of all children are provided with plenty of information about what activities they will be offered, this includes the 'Birth to three matters' framework, the Foundation Stage and the planning for children attending in the holidays and after school. Clear information about policies and procedures is made available with several displayed on the notice board. Staff ensure

parents are fully aware about any workshops, meetings or training and regular 'parent pages' provide information on themes, the curriculum, activities and dates for the diary so parents can ensure their children are ready to take part in these events. Parents comments about the setting confirm that they are kept well informed and that staff endeavour to meet children's individual needs by finding out as much information as possible about them. In this way the staff can individualise the care for their child so they may thrive in the setting.

The setting has a clearly written complaints procedure which is consistent with the Addendum to the National Standards. This includes clear timescales and informs parents of the correct details of how to contact Ofsted.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of leadership and management are outstanding. The manager is currently on a short maternity leave but there is an early years leadership team in place to continue with the high quality management of the setting. Their vision of the quality of child care and nursery education continues to steer the work of the setting and inspire the quality of teaching by other staff to ensure children are able to learn effectively.

The setting monitors its provision for nursery education and continues to improve by evaluating practice, for example, using information as to how children are progressing, observations of which staff do a good job and using up-to-date and relevant research and training materials. As a result, children make excellent progress towards the early learning goals.

The setting demonstrates the high expectations of staff, the children and their families and the registered person and senior staff know what most needs improving. They assesses the strengths and weaknesses, looking at how effective practice is in helping children to become fully engaged and involved. Furthermore, the provision looks at areas of improvement and how they can implement change as a team to benefit children's care and education.

The professional development of staff is managed very well so that teaching and learning is improved. Staff training is identified through staff's training plan or the Effective Early Learning project, ensuring courses are arranged to reach everyone's needs and move the nursery forward in the right direction to continue to provide outstanding care and education for children.

The setting has very robust recruitment and checking procedures which are carried out by Thurrock Council, to ensure all staff are suitable and safe to work with children. Staff are deployed effectively and know their roles and responsibilities, so that they spend most of their time in direct contact with children. Staff rotas work well and staff have areas of responsibility which are fully understood and implemented. This ensures children have continual contact with staff and have their needs identified and met.

There is a system for staff appraisals which is carried out regularly to identify and address staff training needs. These meetings ensure the management team can influence staff and help them to grow professionally, through access to the right support and training. Frequent staff meetings are arranged and monitored to be relevant and cover issues of importance and staff are encouraged to take an active part in them so their ideas can be incorporated into practice.

Staff demonstrate enthusiasm and motivation for their work and use their extensive knowledge and understanding of childcare and education gained through a wealth of training and experience

to provide a happy and inspiring environment for children. This helps children to have good dispositions and confidence. Overall, children's needs are met.

Records, policies and procedures are regularly monitored and updated to ensure practice is clearly reflected. Staff are involved in writing and implementing both the policies and procedures, as this helps them to understand why and how to ensure a consistent approach to their work and to meet children's needs.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to review the accessibility of healthy drinks at snack and mealtimes. Children now have free access to water throughout the session and at snack and mealtimes they are only offered healthy drinks. As a result, children are kept hydrated throughout the day.

At the last nursery education inspection, the setting was given one 'point for consideration'. This related to the use of the whole group story time for younger three year olds, so that staff could more effectively accommodate children's different levels of understanding and concentration. As a result of this, story sessions are now very well supported with small groups of children and those who find it difficult to sit still can do something else with an adult so children's individual needs are met.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received a complaint which related to Standard 6 (safety) Standard 7 (health) and Standard 14 (documentation). An unannounced visit was made to the provision on 11 August 2005 to investigate the concerns and Ofsted was satisfied that the setting had taken adequate steps to manage the situation. However, two actions were issued in relation to Standard 11 (behaviour) and Standard 14 (documentation). These were as follows: Review and update the written policy on behaviour management so that it includes reference to bullying and ensure that Ofsted is notified by the nursery of significant events or incidents at the earliest opportunity. A satisfactory response was received and the setting remains registered.

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 good. 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

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

- assess the risks to children in relation to them using middle foyer unsupervised and take action to minimise these (this relates to access to the doors to the kitchen and toilet, the buggy store and carrier bags).

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