

Ellesmere Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	300751
Inspection date	04 February 2008
Inspector	Jill Lee
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Registered person	The Trustees of Ellesmere Children's Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Ellesmere Children's Centre opened in 1996. It is situated in the Burngreave area of Sheffield. The centre has charitable status and is managed by a committee of volunteers who have personal or professional links with the local community. A variety of activities take place within the centre, including Sheffield College courses and Sure Start. The centre serves children and families from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds, living locally and in the wider Sheffield area. Crèche places are provided in the nursery for parents and carers participating in local training courses and community events within the centre.

Children are cared for in premises converted from an old school building. They are accommodated in three rooms on the ground floor of the building and are grouped according to age. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area and sensory garden.

The centre is registered to care for a maximum of 50 children at any one time. It is open each weekday throughout the year from 08.00 to 18.00. There are currently 80 children on roll, of whom 23 are in receipt of funding for nursery education. The centre supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language.

There are 12 members of staff employed to work directly with the children, of whom 10 hold an appropriate early years qualification and two are working towards this. The centre works closely with the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy experiences outdoors every day. They run, hop, skip and march as they plan races. They learn to balance carefully on the large tyre and tyre bridge. They develop coordination skills as they negotiate the climbing frame and wall. They take their cars to the car wash and play hide and seek in the sensory garden. Staff plan opportunities for children to develop and extend their physical skills in circle games, 'bend and stretch' and dance and movement sessions. Babies' opportunities to play outdoors are less consistently ensured, but they are taken for walks and staff provide resources for active indoor physical play. Toddlers have sturdy toys to push along to support their developing mobility. Wet weather gear and 'weather boxes' help staff to maximise the learning opportunities gained from outdoor play.

Priority is given to ensuring children's good health. Parents are clearly informed that sick children cannot be cared for, so that children are protected from infection. Arrangements for first aid and administering medication meet requirements and effectively protect children. Staff consistently promote good hygiene within everyday routines, so that children clearly understand why they need to wash their hands after using the toilet and before they have their meals. Child height posters are used to remind children of good hygiene practices, like cleaning teeth after meals. Children are developing good levels of independence in attending to their own personal care, as they get tissues independently to wipe their nose and practise fastening their own coats to go out to play.

Parents are fully consulted about their child's health and dietary needs. Children are encouraged to try a wide variety of different, organically grown fruits and vegetables at snack time. They are involved in some food preparation and enjoy baking activities. Main meals are provided by parents, as these cannot be prepared on site. Staff plan ongoing discussions with parents, through parents' meetings, to promote healthy lunch boxes. Mealtimes are relaxed occasions, where staff and children sit together and share conversation. Children of all ages join together for shared, 'family' breakfast and tea times. They are encouraged to become independent in feeding themselves. Children's understanding of being healthy is promoted well in planned projects, although staff do not fully maximise opportunities in daily conversations and routines to reinforce awareness.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe and secure in the nursery, as staff are fully aware of safety issues. Priority is given to security of the premises and procedures to ensure safe evacuation in an emergency are practised regularly with children. Risks, both indoors and out, are identified and minimised. For example, children are always supervised to the toilet, as there are frequently visitors in the building. Younger children do not usually use the outdoor play area at the same time as older ones. The centre is addressing concerns about slippery surfaces in the sensory garden. The day book is used well to alert all staff to any issues. For example, during windy weather loose roof slates were noted. Space is effectively organised to encourage children to move around freely

and independently. Children are appropriately supervised at all times and accidents are systematically monitored to ensure reflective practice.

Children learn to use the well-planned space purposefully. A range of good quality resources is stored at child height, so that children can select them independently. Practice is consistently monitored and evaluated to ensure children's safe participation in everyday activities. Children begin to have awareness of safety issues, because staff discuss and reinforce limits and boundaries with them. For example, they are reminded why it is not safe to run indoors and to take care when water or sand is spilt. Their awareness of wider safety issues is raised in planned activities. For example, regular outings and visits by the road safety officer help to raise children's awareness of road safety issues. They learn about fire safety and the dangers of fireworks.

Protection of children is given a high priority in the centre. Staff help children to share their feelings and make their needs known. They establish supportive relationships with parents and ensure they understand the centre's responsibility with regard to child protection issues. Staff are clear about their responsibilities relating to required record keeping. All staff have accessed common assessment framework, safety net and safeguarding training, so that they are fully familiar with the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The child protection policy reflects current requirements.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy attending the centre, where they are settled and content. Staff know children well and sensitively support their play. The planned play environment promotes experiences in all areas of their development. They experiment with a variety of media, as they fill and empty containers in the water, pour sand down the chute and explore coloured pasta and glittery play dough. Older children pretend to build walls with the large bricks and wet sand outdoors.

The baby room is calm and welcoming. Babies and toddlers play contentedly, learning to enjoy being with others. They snuggle up cosily with staff to read a story. Staff tune into babies' needs, as they respond intuitively to non-verbal communications. For example, a baby points to the shelf and asks for the wind-up wooden 'piano'. Children love the sensory area, where they explore glittery foil, coloured kaleidoscopes and soft materials. They enjoy floor painting and then need bath time to get clean. Staff make plenty of time to talk with parents. They use the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are developing their skills in using observations to plan experiences reflecting children's current interests.

A good range of resources and activities is freely accessible for children to select independently, although staff do not monitor to ensure the range is consistently balanced. For example, exploratory, creative and messy activities are planned regularly for babies, but are not made available to select and explore freely. Resources to support exploratory and creative play are stored in cupboards adjacent to the play areas, which children over two are allowed to access. This presentation does not actively prompt enquiry and interest, which means that extensions to children's play are sometimes limited. Access to malleable play, like play dough, is planned routinely, but cannot usually be chosen freely. Some planning for two year olds does not appropriately reflect their needs; for example, planned circle time interrupts their free play and some focused activities, like writing their name, are not entirely age appropriate.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, which helps children to make good progress towards the early learning goals. Children are motivated to learn and explore, as they enjoy experiences in the continuous provision. They learn to listen well and concentrate on activities they enjoy, like matching shapes, copying letters and sifting sand. However, planning does not clearly identify the intended focus of teaching or new stimulus to extend learning in free play. Small group activities are usually differentiated to enhance children's active involvement.

Children communicate confidently and use language well to share their experiences. They love reading stories. Children recognise and learn to write their own name. Staff promote children's interest in letter sounds in daily circle time. Children become familiar with numbers and planned activities provide opportunity for mathematical exploration. They are interested in different shapes and enjoy activities to match, sort and make patterns. Children enjoy exploratory mathematics in free construction activity, including larger scale construction outdoors. However, staff do not plan to fully maximise opportunities for practical problem solving in free play and daily routines.

Children develop an interest in the natural world, growth and change. They talk about the seasons and the weather. They have 'weather boxes' to enhance activities on wet, windy or snowy days. They fill the bird feeders in winter and plant daffodil bulbs for Mother's Day. They go for nature walks and explore the natural world in their sensory garden. They develop an interest in technology, as they use the computer, take photographs and use the cassette player. Their imagination and creativity is nurtured as they paint, make collage pictures and develop imaginative role play activities. For example, they plan picnics over the 'rickety-rackety' bridge and develop a building site wearing their 'hi-vis' jackets. They dress up as fire fighters and enjoy small world play with the fire engine.

Staff interactions with children stimulate their interest. They model skills and reinforce expected behaviour. This helps children to use activity areas productively. Staff routinely observe children to monitor their individual progress. Planning for next steps is based on a monthly development target, although staff share information about children at weekly 'briefing' meetings. Observations familiarise them with children's interests and help inform their interactions on a more day to day basis. Staff are working to improve ways to link their observations with more consistency to planning next steps in children's learning. They recognise the need to introduce greater challenge and differentiation into daily free play activities, based on observed interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enjoy warm and affectionate relationships with staff. Staff know children very well and support their individual needs effectively. They aim to promote fully inclusive practice, so that all children can join in activities according to their different needs and abilities. For example, staff use signing and pictorial planning to enhance communication. Children participate confidently in the daily routines. They help to tidy away all the toys before circle time and use the dust pan to sweep up after tea.

Children very capably manage many of their own daily experiences. Politeness, sharing and good behaviour are sensitively encouraged and warmly rewarded by lots of praise. The high expectations of staff help children begin to take responsibility for their own behaviour, as they negotiate how to share toys and take turns. Staff work hard to reinforce rules and boundaries with consistency. They aim to involve children actively, to help them fully understand why

certain behaviour, like turn taking, is important. Staff use individual behaviour plans, where required, and work sensitively with parents to help children develop strategies to respond appropriately to difficult situations.

The nursery has well planned links with the local community, as children enjoy nature walks and outings to the shops and library. Visitors stimulate children's knowledge of local issues and the people who help us. Children access a wide range of resources that promote positive images of difference, including books, dressing up clothes and displays. They learn new words in a range of languages, and staff sometimes spontaneously translate stories. Bilingual staff reflect the various community languages spoken and dual language books are often borrowed from the library. Children are routinely introduced to different festivals and cultures in planned activities, helping them to think about and value diversity. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Relationships with parents are comfortable and friendly, helping children feel secure. Parents feel staff are always accessible and willing to make time to discuss their child's progress. Settling-in and transition procedures are emphasised and sensitively implemented. A daily diary is used to give practical information about younger children's care. Parents are well informed about nursery policies. Regular newsletters keep them informed about nursery issues. They complete customer satisfaction surveys and are invited to attend parents' meetings. They are able to borrow books and story sacks from the Sure Start library to share with their child. Parents are confident to raise any concerns. A clear complaints record is kept, as required.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Activity planning and curriculum information are displayed to show what children learn. Photographic displays give parents a vivid insight into the activities enjoyed by their child. Parents contribute to the initial assessment of what their child knows and can do and staff involve them in updating information for transitions. Information about progress is shared informally and also at parents' open days. Staff welcome parents' comments about home experiences, although parents do not contribute actively to their 'learning stories'. Home link packs, including songs to share at home, and leaflets to help parents support play, like 'maths is all around us' and 'everyday science', help to promote parents' active involvement in their child's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Effective planning and organisation within the nursery helps to ensure children's welfare and safety. Significant emphasis is placed on reflecting and valuing children's richly varied cultural backgrounds. Staff make appropriate use of early years guidance, such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum to provide good quality care and education. Consistent staffing and daily 'family time' help to promote children's sense of security in the centre. Daily routines are predominantly child led, enabling staff to support children's varying needs and interests. However, staff do not fully evaluate the impact of routines on children's opportunity to concentrate and extend their own play ideas. For example, circle time is held in the middle of the session, thus interrupting free play. Family time is not clearly planned to ensure that especially older children continue to have an appropriate range of activity choices.

The leadership and management is good. Planned use of space and resources effectively promote children's independent participation. Staff work together as a cohesive team in each room. The manager has developed systems for ongoing self-evaluation of nursery practice with all staff

in regular staff meetings. Routine observations of staff practice and regular appraisals help the manager effectively to monitor the quality of teaching and to identify staff training needs. Systematic observations of children are helping staff to identify children's interests and assist appropriate planning for their progress towards the early learning goals.

All required policies and procedures are in place and implemented effectively, so that children's welfare is safeguarded. Procedures are in place for the regular review and updating of policies. Recruitment systems are robust, ensuring that both staff and committee members are suitable to work with children. Documentation is accessible and stored confidentially. Appropriate induction procedures and ongoing monitoring of staff help to ensure they are effective in meeting children's needs. Parents' wishes regarding their child's care clearly influence day-to-day practice and clear written agreements are recorded.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the centre was asked to review the planning for children under two years to identify developmental aims and progression.

All staff have attended training in the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have fully reviewed the planning structure for younger children. They have created an environment in which children are able to make their own independent choices and plan their own play. Children are observed continuously in their play and observations are recorded. Staff are becoming more skilled at identifying children's interests and using this information to enhance their play experiences. This approach is helping staff to provide appropriate and stimulating experiences to extend children's 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.

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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):

- use everyday routines more actively to promote children's awareness of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle
- re-evaluate the presentation of resources to enhance opportunities in the daily environment for children to freely choose and develop their ideas in a wider range of exploratory and creative activities (also applies to nursery education)
- evaluate continuously the impact of routines on children's opportunity to be fully absorbed in play and extend their own ideas.

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):

- improve the evaluation of observations of children's achievements and progress, so that they are used more effectively to plan next steps in their learning and extend challenge in the daily environment (also applies to care)
- enhance planning for the teaching focus in all areas of the continuous provision, to vary stimulus and more systematically differentiate and extend learning in children's free play.

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