

Ditton Early Years Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY280132
Inspection date	13 February 2008
Inspector	Janice Linsdell
Setting Address	Dundalk Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 8DF
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Registered person	Halton Local Education Authority
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Ditton Early Years Centre opened in 2004 and forms part of Ditton Children's Centre, which is located in the Widnes area of Cheshire. It is run by Halton Borough Council and the head teacher takes day to day responsibility for the management of the provision. The centre operates from purpose built premises and provides full day and out of school care for children aged from birth to under eight years. Children are cared for within five rooms according to their age. The centre also houses a nursery school and provides rooms used by Sure Start to offer various parent and family support groups.

A maximum of 82 children may attend the centre at any one time, including 32 places available for out of school and holiday care. The centre is open each week day from 08.00 to 18.00 for 52 weeks of the year, with the exception of the Christmas period and public holidays. All children share access to the outdoor play areas.

There are currently 67 children aged from birth to under eight years on roll. Children mostly attend from the local area or their parents travel to work in the area. The centre employs 11 members of staff, including the day care manager. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is very well promoted because staff follow effective health and hygiene practices to ensure the environment is clean, healthy and well maintained. For example, cleaning rotas are meticulously followed, with staff regularly disinfecting equipment and washing their hands throughout the day. Hygienic nappy changing procedures are consistently well implemented and children are changed by their individual key worker. Children brush their teeth after lunch, which promotes good dental care, and the tissue dispensers available in each room are well used by children and staff. Children always wash their hands as part of the daily routine and staff remind them to use soap to ensure their hands are 'nice and clean'. However, there are missed opportunities for babies to begin to develop an understanding of hand washing, such as before baking activities.

Children benefit from eating a very healthy and nutritious diet because staff understand and actively promote healthy eating. Meals are freshly prepared on the premises by a qualified chef and the weekly menu offers a good selection of well balanced meals, such as casseroles, fish pie and curry. Snacks are also very healthy and include a selection of fresh fruit, vegetables and brown bread. Water is freely available in all rooms so that children can help themselves to drinks at any time. Mealtimes are enjoyable occasions where staff sit and chat with the children and encourage their social skills.

The very spacious and well designed outdoor play areas provide much enjoyment for the children and really benefits their physical health and well-being. The large play equipment enables them to practise their climbing and balancing skills, and the adventure playground for older children really challenges their strength, balance and coordination. Children very much enjoy outdoor play, for example, as they throw the bean bags or race the wheeled toys around the track. They show skill using the bat and ball, and have good opportunities to play imaginatively as they build dens with the cardboard boxes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are purpose built and offer some good facilities for the children. As a result, they are cared for in a very safe, secure and child friendly environment. Children's rooms are bright and spacious, with some excellent play materials available in well organised and clearly labelled storage units. Suitable cots are available for babies, but the sleeping arrangements for young children means that some children share the soft beds and bedding. This impacts on their comfort and hygiene. Security on the premises is very good and visitors are unable to gain entry unannounced. All internal doors are key coded and passwords are in use if children are collected by anyone other than a parent.

Good arrangements are in place to ensure the building is safe and well maintained because detailed risk assessments are carried out and staff complete the 'hazard sheet' in each room. Outdoor areas are checked prior to children's use and in the main, fire drills are generally conducted on a regular basis. Children are learning about how to keep themselves safe because staff remind them about hazards, such as why they should not climb on furniture. Children wear safety helmets when riding the bicycles and use high visibility jackets when they go on outings.

Children's welfare is well safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of their role in keeping children safe from harm. They show awareness of the indicators of abuse and know the procedures to follow should any concerns be identified. Relevant information regarding safeguarding procedures is available for staff to refer to, and some staff have attended training in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children are very comfortable and happy at the centre because staff are warm, affectionate and responsive to children's needs. Staff show enthusiasm when carrying out activities with the children, supporting and guiding their play well. This enables children to enjoy what they are doing and develop good levels of confidence. Staff frequently discuss the children's needs, abilities and preferences throughout the day, to ensure everyone is well informed. This means children are well cared for according to parents' wishes. Good quality play materials are available in all rooms, with some excellent resources to promote heuristic play in the baby room, but the cupboard is locked so they are not always freely available for children to explore.

There is a good balance of adult led and child initiated activities on offer, so that children are well stimulated and enjoy their time at the centre. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework well, to plan, observe and assess children's progress. Activities are carefully planned to give children a wide range of exciting experiences, such as exploring with paint, water, sand and play dough. Lots of photographic evidence is available to show children involved in varied and interesting experiences, such as planting bulbs, making vegetable soup and enjoying a trip to the local fruit and vegetable shop.

Babies and young children enjoy participating in baking activities; taking turns in measuring and mixing the ingredients, and cutting out shapes to make biscuits. They show much interest as they walk around the grounds, for example, viewing and smelling the flowers, feeling the cold texture of the water feature and listening to the birds singing. Children aged over three years have plenty of space to move around three large play areas, offering many interesting experiences, such as the computer suite and the exciting areas for role play, creative play, quiet reading and construction. Children thoroughly enjoy outdoor play, where they have time and space to use their imagination and develop their own games. Older children attending the holiday club say they enjoy coming to the centre and they really enjoy playing outside and riding the bicycles.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff know the children very well and encourage them to join in with all activities within the centre. There are many photographs and displays of children's work in all rooms, which helps to promote their sense of belonging. Children learn about diversity and the wider world, for example, through the various posters and displays, the planned topics and the good selection of resources that reflect positive images of culture and disability. The premises are fully accessible for children of all abilities and staff show a commitment to equality and inclusion.

Children's behaviour is excellent. This is because of the very positive and supportive approach of the staff team, who act as good role models in encouraging and promoting children's behaviour. Children are encouraged to help their friends with small tasks, such as rolling up

their sleeves ready for lunch. There are good quality posters around the room to remind children about positive behaviour, for example, to share, pick up toys and use good manners. Staff provide plenty of praise and show appreciation for children's efforts.

Partnership with parents is good and staff work effectively with them to meet the children's needs. Initially, staff discuss operational procedures with parents and share details of the written policies available. They provide parents with a good level of information about the children's care, for example, through the day books, newsletters, notice boards and the friendly chats at the end of the day. Also, the photograph albums on display in the entrance hall show some very good examples of children enjoying their time at the centre. The well equipped 'home learning packs' encourage parents to become involved in the children's learning at home. Parent questionnaires are issued to seek parents views and opinions, and any suggestions for improvement are acted upon.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The centre operates with a fully qualified staff team, with most staff trained to level 3 standard. This well exceeds minimum requirements. Staff have good opportunities to attend a wide range of training to enhance their skills and knowledge. Robust systems are in place to ensure all staff are vetted to ensure their suitability to care for the children, although there is no formal system in place for checking the ongoing suitability of staff.

The effective management structure in place and the good team work reflects a commitment to continual development and improvement. Staff appraisals, midway reviews and team meetings are held regularly and room monitoring is carried to assess practice. This means the centre is well organised and runs efficiently, which contributes to the good level of care and support that children receive.

Policies and procedures work very well in practice to promote positive outcomes for children. The operational file is well organised and made available to parents on request. Written policies are reviewed and updated annually. All legally required documentation to safeguard children's care and welfare is in place and very well maintained. Daily registers are accurately maintained in most rooms, with one minor omission in the toddler room register. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the child protection statement has been updated to include the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. Also, the uncollected child policy has been amended to show the procedures that staff should follow if children are not collected from the centre. These improvements help to promote the children's safety and welfare.

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

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.

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):

- review and improve the sleeping arrangements for young children
- further develop procedures for checking the ongoing suitability of staff.

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