

The Fields Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY280222
Inspection date	07 February 2008
Inspector	Heidi Falconer
Setting Address	c/o Abbey Meadows School, Galfrid Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB5 8ND
Telephone number	01223 518333 01223 712444
E-mail	office@fieldsearlyyears.cambs.sch.uk
Registered person	The Governing Body of The Fields Children's Centre
Type of inspection	Childcare
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

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?

The Fields Children's Centre opened in 2004 and is situated on the same site as Abbey Meadows Primary school, in Cambridge, Cambridgeshire. The centre comprises of a day nursery, which is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 49 weeks of the year; a crèche to support parents and carers attending the centre; and a variety of courses and drop-in support groups for parents, carers and their families. All services are housed in a purpose-built building with outdoor play areas for the children.

There are currently 128 children aged from three months up to five years on roll in the day nursery. The crèche offers a maximum of 24 places and operates as required to support various adult groups that meet in the centre. Children who attend the crèche are mostly under three years of age. The setting welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

A board of governors oversee the operations of the centre, including the management of the budget and recruitment of staff. There is an overall head of centre. She is supported by a management team which includes a day care co-ordinator and a deputy head of the centre.

The centre employs 21 staff who work with the children in the day nursery. Over half the staff hold early years qualifications to Level 2 or 3. In addition, a number of Sure Start workers can be called on to work when the crèche is operating.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive because practitioners follow highly effective procedures and practices, which meet their physical, nutritional and health needs. Well-documented information is obtained from parents about their child's personal health needs and this is meticulously recorded in an individual care plans. Children's health is promoted as a result of the excellent hygiene systems which are fully understood and consistently implemented by practitioners throughout the centre. Children are consistently protected from cross-infection as their dummies are sterilised and stored in individual pots. In addition, practitioners always wear gloves and aprons when changing nappies and sanitise the changing station after each use. Children independently and enthusiastically wash their hands at appropriate times with little adult intervention, demonstrating their good understanding of personal care routines. Older children, understand why they need to wash their hands and laminated signs in the bathroom remind them of the order in which they needs to use water, soap and paper towels. This promotes their independence.

Practitioners give high priority to ensuring that children are provided with healthy meals and snacks, which they enjoy. The setting has recently gained a 'Healthy School's' award and all meals are prepared on the premises using locally sourced produce. Well-balanced hot meals such as sausages, mashed potatoes and vegetables are provided at lunchtime. All practitioners have an excellent understanding of each child's dietary needs and rigorous procedures are in place to ensure that these needs are met. For example, the dietary requirements list is updated each month and extremely detailed information is obtained from the parents of young babies about the foods which have been introduced safely at home.

Children have excellent opportunities to engage in physical play within the setting, enabling them to explore, test and develop control of their bodies. For example, children of all ages go outside on a daily basis. Babies are wrapped up warmly and are taken on walks whilst children between the ages of one and three actively use the outdoor play equipment. They learn to climb and balance as they use challenging slides, stepping stones and fixed climbing structures. Children's co-ordination skills are promoted further as they use bats, balls, hoops and ride scooters and bikes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The setting gives a high priority to safeguarding children and protecting their welfare. Senior practitioners have attended in-depth training in child protection, and they are extremely knowledgeable of the procedures to follow if they had concerns about a child or if an allegation was made against a member of staff. All practitioners are actively encouraged to attend child protection training and they are made aware of the setting's written child protection during their first day of employment. This policy is also shared with parents.

Practitioner's commitment to welcome children and their parents to the setting is outstanding. Playrooms are brightly decorated with the children's photographs, art work, posters and mobiles. In each room there is a digital photo frame with an ever changing photo slideshow of children taking part in activities. Corridors are decorated with attractive displays and informative notice boards for parents. Children use an excellent range of good quality, developmentally appropriate resources. These are well organised in child-height furniture to encourage independent access.

Exceptional security procedures are in place to keep children safe by restricting access to the setting. The premises are closely monitored by close circuit television and an intercom system is used to gain entry to the main building. Once in the main entrance area, only parents and staff in possession of a 'key fob' can access the areas used by the children. Detailed risk assessments and daily checks continue to ensure that children's risk of accidental injury is greatly reduced.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Practitioners throughout the setting have an excellent understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They use it very successfully to record children's individual progress and plan stimulating activities which promote their learning and development. For example, each child has a 'profile folder' which contains photographs and written observations which chart their achievements. These records are regularly available to parents, who are able to take them home so that they can be looked at in detail. Practitioners use these observations to plan a exciting range of activities which promote children's individual 'next steps' in their learning. All children's enjoyment is greatly enhanced by practitioners who are caring and interact well with them during their play. For example, babies settle well and enjoy lots of close contact with practitioners. They allow themselves to be held close while being bottle fed by practitioners who talk to them and make good eye contact. This helps to promote their feelings of security.

All children take part in a wealth of activities which enable them to represent their experiences and ideas in a variety of ways. For example, each day they play with different malleable materials such as dough, sand, 'gloop' and jelly and rice. As children in the 'Snowdrop' room play with jelly they benefit and enjoy the freedom to explore its taste, texture and feel as they rub the jelly between their hands and rub it on their cheeks. Their language development is promoted as practitioners ask them to talk about what they can taste, smell and feel.

In the 'Buttercup' room children enjoy opportunities to be creative on a large scale as they use brushes, sponges and paint to make their body prints on large pieces of paper. All children under the age of two enjoy the textures of natural materials which they explore with interest. For example, they play hide and seek under lengths of material before wrapping it over their shoulders and spinning around. Children's enjoyment is clearly evident in these activities as they stamp their feet with excitement and laugh as they play. Children between the ages of two and three in the 'Bluebell' room play very happily together and particularly enjoy using the home area to role play real life situations and imaginary events. For example, they enjoy dressing up pretending to be dragons, lions and horses.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children behave well, learn to work harmoniously with others, to take turns and share because practitioners use positive methods to help them understand the rules. For example, when two children were reluctant to share the pirate toys a practitioner calmly explained to them why it was important to share. She then introduced a sand timer as a way of helping the children to negotiate how long they used each set of pirates for before swapping them over. Practitioners use praise and encouragement at appropriate times to promote and recognise good behaviour.

Children take part in a good range of activities which allow them to experience different cultures, and learn about the world around them. For example, recently they have been involved in activities such as making dragons and tasting food to help them learn about Chinese New Year. Practitioners work hard to ensure that children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully integrated into the setting. For example, individual care plans are in place which are developed and shared with parents and other professionals. Generally suitable procedures are in place to support children who speak English as an additional language. However, these are not consistently implemented by staff.

Children benefit from the good relationships which develop between practitioners and their parents. There is a very good daily exchange of verbal information between parents and staff which includes routine, activities and achievements. Practitioner's record information throughout the day and this is used to give parents accurate verbal feedback about their child's day. Written evidence demonstrates that parents are extremely happy with the care given to their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Thorough recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to protect children and ensure that practitioners caring for them are suitable. For example, evidence of qualifications, identity and references are sought and until all of the required checks have been completed good procedures are in place to ensure that new practitioners are never left unsupervised with the children. A programme of regular appraisals is in place and used to identify training needs. A wealth of written policies and procedures are in place to support children's welfare and care. All confidential records are stored securely to protect their privacy.

Practitioners are deployed well. This ensures that children are well supported in their activities and that the required ratios are met at all times, particularly over the lunch period. Practitioners work together well as a team to create a stimulating environment where children are happy and relaxed. The rooms and space are organised generally well to create a child-centred environment. However, the organisation of lunch times and the use of the outdoor play area restrict children's ability to be independent. For example, older children are not able to serve themselves at lunch time which means that they are kept waiting, whilst one practitioner serves the meals one by one. In addition, children have limited opportunities to decide when they would like to play outside. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group was asked to improve their systems for recording children's attendance. All attendance records have been developed and now accurately show the children's times of arrival and departure. As a consequence the setting meets the requirements of the

National Standards and is able to effectively promote children's safety in the event of an emergency.

The setting was also asked to develop their induction procedures for all new staff. A detailed induction policy is now in place which ensures that all new staff are fully aware of the practices and policies of the setting.

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):

- improve staff's awareness of how they can support children who speak English as an additional language
- improve the organisation of mealtimes and the use of the outdoor area to promote children's independence.

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