

Overland Childrens Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119601
Inspection date	06 March 2008
Inspector	Kelly Eyre
Setting Address	60 Parnell Road, Bow, London, E3 2RU
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Registered person	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
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

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?

Overland Children's Centre was first registered for day care in 1975 and evolved into a Sure Start Children's centre in February 2007. It is run by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to serve families living in this Borough. The centre comprises a full day care facility which is open each weekday all year round, with sessions from 08:00 to 17:30; a crèche to support parents and carers attending the centre and a variety of services including family support and outreach services, health services, support for a local childminder network and job-seeking activities. Since October 2003, the centre has incorporated the borough's special unit for hearing-impaired children.

The services are housed in a purpose-built building with outdoor play areas for the children. There are also some services provided at locations in the local area and these include speech and language sessions, soft play sessions and play and information sessions.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the day care facility at any one time. There are currently 49 children aged from 18 months to under five years on roll. Of these, nine children receive funding for early education. The crèche offers a maximum of ten places and operates as required

to support the various groups and training sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

A steering group acts in an advisory capacity to the centre. There is an overall centre manager and she is supported by a management team that includes two deputies, one of whom manages the day care facility and another who manages the family support services. There are 16 staff who work with the children in the day care provision, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's physical development is well promoted and they are offered a wide variety of activities. They are able to develop control of their bodies and improve skills such as balance, co-ordination and control as they balance on scooters, climb, crawl through hoops and throw and catch balls. They also enjoy structured sessions such as music and movement and action rhymes. Children have good opportunities to develop finer physical skills and movements through their involvement in a range of activities. For example, children participating in a craft activity use scissors, hold pencils correctly and manipulate small craft pieces.

Children's health is consistently promoted because staff have a thorough understanding of this area. There are good daily hygiene procedures in place which minimise the spread of infection, for example staff wear appropriate protective clothing when changing nappies and tables are cleaned thoroughly before meal times. Children generally wash their hands before eating but the spread of infection is not fully minimised as they do not consistently wash their hands before snack time. They are gaining some understanding of the relevance of good personal hygiene because staff generally discuss these issues with them. Children's health in an emergency situation is promoted because appropriate first aid qualifications are held by three staff members and all staff have completed basic first aid training.

Children's health and development are further promoted as they are offered a wide range of healthy snacks and meals. Menus are displayed and demonstrate the provision of a balanced range of all food types including fresh fruit and vegetables. Snack and meal times provide additional learning opportunities, where children are able to gain valuable social skills. They sit in small groups and often help serve their snacks and drinks. However, their independence is not fully promoted as they are not consistently involved in the range of associated tasks, such as helping to prepare snacks or setting the table. Allergies and special diets are clearly recorded and staff have implemented a stringent system to ensure that children are only offered the correct food and drinks.

Extended health services provided by the centre have a positive impact on the outcomes for children; for example the centre offers speech and language support, health reviews, a mobile dentist, adult and child psychology, nutrition and dietetic advice and smoking cessation support.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is prioritised and consistently promoted to a high standard because all staff have an excellent understanding of this area and take positive steps to prevent accidents and to plan for emergencies. Policies, procedures and paperwork in this area are exceptionally comprehensive and are put into practice on a daily basis. The practical use of comprehensive risk assessments and daily safety checks of all areas further ensure that children's safety is promoted at all times and they are able to move freely around the setting. Children are gaining an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, they understand the importance of taking turns when using static equipment and are able to describe how to use scissors safely.

Continuous assessment of the environment ensures that children are cared for in a highly stimulating and welcoming setting where their work and photographs are creatively displayed. Resources are extremely well organised and easily accessible, for example children are able to choose what to play with or are inspired to extend their activities as resources are clearly labelled with both words and pictures. The comprehensive guidance regarding the purchase and maintenance of toys, resources and equipment ensures that these are always clean and safe for children to use.

Children's welfare is promoted to a high standard because staff are experienced, have an excellent understanding of the principles of safeguarding children and have ensured that they are able to report and follow up concerns without delay. This is supported by ongoing training, excellent liaison with other agencies, comprehensive policies and guidance and robust procedures to ensure the recruitment and employment of suitable staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They come in confidently to the setting and eagerly explore the resources and activities. Their daily experiences of the setting are enhanced by staff who are very caring and show the children how much they genuinely enjoy their company, enthusiastically joining in with their play and discussions. Children therefore feel valued and react positively to this atmosphere, promoting a warm and caring environment where they are able to play confidently and are enthusiastic about their activities. They have high self-esteem because they are given appropriate praise and encouragement from staff; for example, they proudly show their completed work to each other and to members of staff.

The comprehensive settling-in procedures ensure that new children settle well and build secure relationships with staff. The procedures include home visits, an individual settling-in plan for each child and frequent reviews to ensure that staff are aware of children's individual needs and can offer appropriate care and activities. Key workers work closely with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered consistent care and any additional needs are identified and met. Additional family support and outreach services provided by the centre have a positive impact on outcomes for children. For example, staff are able to offer extra childcare sessions to enable parents to attend training.

The careful planning of activities for all age groups ensures that children are consistently offered a balanced range of opportunities which are relevant to their individual needs and developmental stages. Staff are experienced and have a good understanding of child development, combining

this with their knowledge of individual children to ensure that all are offered appropriate activities. The good use of resources means that children are offered additional activities that promote their learning. An example of this is the sensory room which has been thoughtfully equipped to promote the development of speech and language.

Good planning means that children are able to move freely between indoor and outdoor play areas for the majority of the day. All areas of learning are promoted in both areas, offering children an extended range of activities and play opportunities. They confidently move between these areas, accessing activities such as crafts, sand play, reading, painting and physical play on the static equipment. Vigilant staff ensure that children are supported in their chosen activities, playing alongside them and extending their learning with appropriate suggestions and questions.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress in all areas and their overall development is promoted because staff have a thorough knowledge of the Foundation Stage, enabling them to plan and provide appropriate activities. Children make well-balanced progress in all areas because staff use practical methods for monitoring and assessing them, using the information gained from this to inform future planning.

Children are offered a wide range of daily activities and play resources that promote their confidence in playing and exploring. These include role play, reading, sand play and a creative variety of crafts and construction. Their knowledge is then further extended as they participate in a range of themed topics, enabling them to look more closely at subjects such as 'Journeys', where they read stories about travelling, discuss emotions relating to journeys, make three-dimensional models of vehicles and experiment by making a boat that does not sink.

Children are offered a wide range of opportunities to develop their natural inquisitiveness and the positive attitudes that enable them to develop and achieve in their future learning. For example, they are confident, have a high self-esteem and are gaining a good understanding of right and wrong. They confidently initiate conversations and are gaining an understanding of the importance of listening to others, for example, during small group work they are encouraged to take turns in the discussion and to allow each person to speak. Children show a keen interest in books, enjoying both individual and group stories. They are beginning to use writing as a means of communication, for example pretending to write letters and post these.

Children are beginning to use numbers in a meaningful context and are able to see connections and relationships in these. For example, they sort and compare objects according to colour size and shape, counting the number of objects in each group. Children incorporate mathematical language into their daily play and understand the meaning of this vocabulary, for example using words such as 'big', 'bigger' and 'smallest'. They have some opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge in their daily activities, for example measuring their height and making a record of this. However, their learning in this area is not fully promoted as they are not offered consistent opportunities to use problem-solving skills as part of their daily play.

Children have numerous interesting opportunities to observe, explore and question in a wide range of activities that form the foundation of their later learning in subjects such as history, geography and science, for example they experiment with ice, grow cress and wild flowers, visit the farm and discuss animals of the world and the climates in which they live. Children are

becoming competent in the use of information and communication technology equipment, using tape recorders, keyboards, telephones, calculators and programmable toys.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills. When using the outdoor area, they climb and balance on logs and beams, crawl through tunnels, balance on ride-on toys and dig in the sand. They enjoy opportunities to explore music and learn how sounds can be changed. An example of this is their use of the 'listening area', where they are able to access a creative range of musical instruments and compare different sounds and rhythms. The development of children's imagination is encouraged through the provision of a range of resources and role play areas. These have included a fruit and vegetable shop, a travel agent's, a café, a baby clinic and a construction site.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are highly valued as individuals and are offered a wealth of opportunities. They are consistently offered appropriate support from skilled, caring staff, enabling them to fully participate and develop to their full potential. Children are respected at all times and play an active part in the setting. They are encouraged to express themselves and to say what they would like to do. This area is further strengthened by staff's excellent understanding of the concept of equality of opportunity and of children's rights, enabling them to work fairly with all children and promote their intellectual and emotional development. Staff in all areas of the centre work tirelessly to promote the inclusion of all children and all sectors of the community, often working in partnership with community members and other professionals to establish appropriate services for hard-to-reach groups.

Children are offered an extensive range of play opportunities and activities that promote their understanding of the diversities of wider society. They have daily access to a wealth of play resources that provide positive images and information about other cultures and ways of life. These include books, posters, dressing-up clothes, dolls, musical instruments and artefacts from around the world. Their understanding is further encouraged through their interaction with a wide range of visitors to the setting. Examples of these include African drummers and a drama group. Children are gaining an excellent awareness of their local community and are also enabling other people to understand the role of the setting. They regularly visit a variety of local facilities, including parks, shops and the farm.

Children's behaviour is excellent throughout the sessions as they confidently choose their activities and competently negotiate turn-taking and sharing. They show care and concern for each other and willingly help with tasks such as tidying-up between activities. Staff demonstrate excellent skills in managing children's behaviour, always offering clear explanations so that children are able to understand this and take responsibility for their actions. Staff act as excellent role models, remaining respectful, calm and attentive to all. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children who have learning difficulties or disabilities have their individual requirements clearly recognised and consistently met. There is a comprehensive, practical policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is consistently implemented. They have attended additional training and show great skill and sensitivity in working with children and parents. Children have individual plans which relate directly to their needs and are reviewed on a regular basis, ensuring the balanced promotion of their development and the consistent meeting of their specific needs.

The clear planning and high levels of support ensure that children are able to participate meaningfully in all activities and daily routines.

The centre incorporates the Borough of Tower Hamlet's special unit for hearing-impaired children. One-to-one support from specialist staff, the excellent provision of resources and highly appropriate individual plans for each child ensure that they are able to make excellent progress. Individual reports and statistical analysis show that hearing-impaired children attending the centre are performing at a higher level when starting school than their peers who have not received these services.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. There is a comprehensive starter pack which provides detailed information on all practical issues. New children and parents also receive home visits before starting at the centre and each child has a settling-in plan which is tailored to meet their individual needs. These measures ensure that parents are fully aware of the centre's practice and procedures, enabling them to feel confident in the staff and in turn pass this confidence on to their children. Excellent use is made of notice boards throughout the setting, providing a wealth of information on a wide range of topics such as health, safety and behavioural issues. There is also comprehensive information about the current planning and the Foundation Stage, clearly showing how these link with children's play and development.

Parents are kept exceptionally well informed of their children's activities and progress through newsletters, regular discussions with staff, written reports and regular review meetings. Parents' views are highly valued and are actively sought in a number of ways. Examples of this include annual questionnaires, evaluations of specific activities and services and the consultation of local parents regarding the types of services they would like provided. This ongoing commitment to obtaining feedback ensures that all users of the centre feel that their views are valued and also ensures that children are consistently offered highly appropriate care and activities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, children's needs are met. Their daily care and play experiences are enhanced due to the attention they receive from caring, well-supervised staff and from the attention paid to detail in the organisation of the setting. Children's ongoing welfare and safety are promoted because there are stringent procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. This is further supported by a comprehensive staff induction process, regular supervision and daily monitoring of all areas of the setting to ensure that policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied. All paperwork and records are in place to ensure that children's needs are clearly documented and staff can work appropriately to promote their ongoing safety and development. Excellent liaison between all staff based at the centre and with other agencies ensures that children receive appropriate and consistent care and support and also benefit from the extended support offered to their families.

Children's activities and play opportunities are enhanced by the thoughtful organisation of space. Designated areas for different types of activities mean that children are able to concentrate on their chosen activity and can move safely between these. The good organisation of the outdoor play area means that children are offered an extended range of activities and play opportunities.

Leadership and management is good. Children's overall development and welfare are promoted by the clear understanding that the manager and deputies have of their roles and responsibilities.

They continuously review the setting's practice and procedures to ensure that they are meeting all regulations consistently. They act as very good role models, demonstrating their commitment to providing a high quality service and their genuine enjoyment of their daily work with children and families. The positive attitude to obtaining feedback and utilising this to review the service provided ensures that children are consistently offered appropriate care that meets their current needs. Staff support each other and work well as a team. They are well supervised and receive support in all areas of their work and for all training needs. This creates a positive atmosphere within the setting, in which children can play, learn and develop.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection, the setting was asked to ensure that a record of the contact details of all people working at the centre is readily available. This is now in place, promoting the welfare of staff and children. They were also asked to ensure that staffing ratios are maintained at all times. Staff deployment has been reviewed and additional staff employed to ensure that correct ratios are always maintained, further promoting children's safety and welfare.

At their last inspection of funded early education there were no significant weaknesses to report. The setting gave consideration to fostering children's communication skills and extending their vocabulary by ensuring that these aspects are included in all daily play and in activity planning. These changes further improve children's learning in this area.

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 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 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):

- continue to develop daily procedures to promote children's independence and good personal hygiene practices.

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):

- continue to develop opportunities for children to use problem-solving skills as part of their daily play and activities.

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