

Gateway House Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123110
Inspection date	08 July 2008
Inspector	Linda Close
Setting Address	St. Jude's Church Hall, Heslop Road, Balham, Balham, SW12 8EG
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Registered person	Elizabeth Marshall
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 satisfactory. 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?

Gateway House Nursery School opened in 1990. It operates from a church hall and an adjoining room. There are toilet facilities, an office and a kitchen although no meals are cooked on the premises. The church hall is situated in a residential road in the Balham area of southwest London. The local authority is Wandsworth. A maximum of 35 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:00 to 12:00 in term time only. During the summer term the older children can bring a packed lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays to help them to prepare for their move to primary school. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 33 children on roll aged from two years to under five years and 17 of these children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery currently has no children on roll who have learning difficulties or disabilities. A small number of the children on roll speak more than one language.

The nursery has six staff, two of whom work part-time. There are three members of staff, including the provider, who hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children can be cared for appropriately if they have an accident because a member of staff who has trained in paediatric first aid is present at every session. Parents have given written permission for staff to seek emergency medical treatment or advice for the children if required. Children's accidents and any necessary medications are recorded correctly and records are shared with parents. Staff help children to understand the importance of having clean hands before eating and they supervise the children to ensure that hands are washed after children use the toilet facilities.

Children can have a drink of water at any time. Tables are cleaned with care before children sit down to eat their snack. They have either milk or water to drink at snack time according to their own choice or parental preference. Children enjoyed their drink at snack time and they each had a plain biscuit which they eat with pleasure. Healthy choices of fresh fruit are sometimes offered to the children. The oldest group can stay at the nursery at the end of the morning session to eat a packed lunch brought from home on two days each week in the term before moving on to primary school but no meals are prepared on the premises.

Children have sufficient space for games and activities that help to develop control over their bodies. They are developing accuracy in throwing and catching through playing games indoors and outside. They climb with growing confidence on a sturdy climbing frame indoors. They play games using a good range of small apparatus including stilts, bean bags, quoits and a selection of balls of different sizes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are warmly welcomed into a suitably spacious nursery environment. The hall and the side room used by the children and staff are adequately lit and they have suitable heating and ventilation. Security at the building is good. The outer doors are locked when parents leave at the beginning of the session which means that children cannot leave unnoticed and strangers cannot enter unobserved. A member of staff is stationed by the door at all times when it is open to keep the children safe.

Children have easy access to a wide selection of books that are arranged in several places around the setting. They can choose from an extensive range of toys and resources that are arranged on shelves and in boxes so that they can access them easily. Children's toys and dressing up clothes are washed and repaired as and when necessary. Staff check the resources as they are put away at the end of the sessions and major cleaning takes place at the end of term.

Children are kept safe in most respects within the setting. For example, they cannot access electrical sockets, no trip hazards were noted and staff keep the kitchen door closed at all times so that children cannot access cleaning materials or sharp utensils. Fire extinguishers are in place and signs clearly indicate the exits. However, the fire evacuation procedure is only displayed in one area of the building and it is not complete. There is no indication of which members of staff take responsibility for different tasks in the event of an emergency evacuation to guide them in keeping children safe. Children who are not collected at the end of the session are cared for appropriately. Staff call their parents and they can use an emergency contact number

which they have in each child's records. However, the policy and procedure for uncollected children does not mention contacting social services if this is required.

Children are safeguarded in relation to child protection issues because the staff are well informed. They know what signs or symptoms can suggest ill-treatment and they know what steps to take if they have concerns for the welfare of the children in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily at the beginning of their nursery session. They find no difficulty in parting from their parents or their carers. They smile when they see their key workers and their friends and they are keen to enter the setting and choose a toy or activity. They know the regular routine of the session which helps them to feel confident and secure. The children can select favourite toys as soon as they enter the hall because the staff prepare the environment before the children arrive. Staff prepare their planning with reference to the Foundation Stage for learning and they adjust the activities appropriately to meet the needs of older and younger children. Plans show that staff provide a range of activities that are varied and interesting.

Children respond well to the staff who are consistently calm, polite and pleasant. They are good role models for the children who are calm, polite and pleasant in their turn. The earlier part of the session allows older and younger children to play together. The older children are careful not to injure the little ones in their play and the younger children observe the older children and learn from them. This organisation successfully follows the Montessori philosophy of caring for older and younger children together so that they can learn from one another. Children are actively encouraged to choose freely from the range of resources which includes some Montessori materials. They are also encouraged to help to put away their toys and resources when they have finished playing with them. Children make full use of imaginative play materials. They dress up and play in the castle where they take turns in making meals for their friends.

The whole group joins together for circle and registration time. Children answer clearly when their name is called and all children listen very well to stories and discussions. However, the older children answer most of the questions and the little ones predominantly observe. The younger members of the group do not benefit fully from discussions at circle time because the subject matter is sometimes too advanced. For example, they were unable to offer ideas about what town foxes can find to eat. Older and younger children divide into groups for age appropriate activities for part of each session. Children work with their key workers and they clearly enjoy their activities. Children focus well on worthwhile adult led tasks which include many art and craft activities, counting, matching, construction play and puzzle making. They explore paint, glue and a good selection of papers and materials and they make attractive pictures and mobiles which are attractively displayed to enhance their learning environment. However, the art and craft tasks are sometimes over directed by adults which means that the children do not always have enough opportunity to make their pictures in their own way.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are well organised in that they plan activities in advance and they prepare resources before the children arrive. Planning documents show that the children take part in activities that are varied and interesting. They show good levels of concentration and they sustain their involvement in their activities. Staff plan topics in advance and they devise more detailed plans for each week which they display for parents. All

planning shows how the work is linked to the six areas of learning. Staff do not indicate next steps in learning for the children but they know the children well. Group leaders maintain records of each child's progress and they can readily identify what each child in their group needs to learn next. Parents know who their child's group leader is and they are encouraged to exchange news and information with them about their children on a regular basis.

Children choose toys and resources confidently. They are well behaved and they play together happily. They put away their toys very efficiently at the end of free play. Staff show the children that they are valued. They praise them for being helpful which raises the children's self-esteem. Children show a growing sense of independence when they find their smocks and when they select resources and use them in their own way for mark making but they do not pour out their own drinks or take part in preparation for snack time which is not wholly consistent.

Staff concentrate on developing children's vocabulary and clear speech. They introduce the letters of the alphabet and talk about the sounds that the letters make. Staff explain new words such as hammock, nap and snooze when they are sharing story books with the children. Older children find their own labelled smocks and many can write their own names with correctly formed letters. They have easy access to a good selection of mark making materials and they hold their pencils, felt tips and crayons correctly. Planned activities help the older children to move on to identifying simple words. Children enjoy looking at books and they handle them well.

Children demonstrate their growing knowledge of colours, shapes and numbers in discussion and when they are drawing. They are also encouraged to use their knowledge in games which include throwing a given number of coloured Velcro balls at a large target with matching coloured sections. Staff use words to describe quantity, length and weight in daily discussions with the children over practical work. In this way they provide worthwhile learning experiences through play. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is extended well through topic work. They find out where our food comes from. Their potato plants and onions growing in pots outside enable them to find out what plants need to grow and how they develop from seeds. They study the changes in nature as the seasons progress on their outings to the local park. Children show confidence and growing expertise in their use of a modern computer with suitable software although their progress in this aspect of learning is not recorded. Children learn about people and life in other countries. They have a good selection of national costumes for dressing up and they learn about festivals and celebrations from a range of cultures.

Children gain increasing control over their hands through using Montessori resources which include dressing exercises, using tweezers and spoons and building towers with graded bricks. They also have daily opportunities to use construction toys, glue spreaders, paint brushes and scissors and their dexterity is developing well. Children enjoy singing and music making at the nursery. Their art work is colourful and varied and displayed examples show that they use a good range of materials and media although the staff sometimes limit children's opportunities to explore them fully as they often direct the art work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are discussed and recorded at the time of registration. Staff show in discussion that they know the children well and they often confer with parents to ensure that they are up to date. Parents are encouraged to share family news with staff which may have an impact on the children and this helps the staff to care for the children well. Children

of all abilities are welcome to join the setting. The provider is aware of the individual planning that would be required for any child who has learning difficulties or disabilities although there are none in the setting at present.

Staff are consistent in the way they manage children's behaviour. They praise the children and thank them for being kind and helpful. They get down to the children's level and talk with them in a firm but kindly way if any disagreements occur. The children respond well to them and children's behaviour is very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are warmly welcomed at the beginning of the day and staff confer with them often so that they are aware of children's progress. Planning is displayed in the entrance area so that parents can send in any useful items for topic discussions. The planning also enables parents to talk about nursery activities with their children which enables parents to support and extend children's learning at home. Parents are invited to help with nursery outings. They also enjoy social events and they share celebrations and activities at Christmas time and at the end of the school year. The nursery complaints procedure invites parents to share any concerns that they may have with the provider and staff. However, this document provides contact details for Ofsted that are out of date.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The provider works beside her staff every day and she makes sure that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The recruitment procedure ensures that staff are checked for their suitability to work with children at the time of their employment. Senior staff work with new staff to provide guidance and supervision. A shortlist of suitable staff can be called upon to cover staff absence. Sufficient staff hold relevant qualifications to meet regulations and some staff are experienced but not qualified.

Staff have attended some useful training courses. Staff appraisal currently takes place on an informal basis for staff to discuss their work and their training needs with the provider. However, the provider has attended appraisal training recently and she has plans in place to formalise and extend her appraisal work with the staff in the near future. Frequent staff meetings take place which enable staff to share any issues or concerns with the rest of the staff team. These meetings also give staff opportunities to discuss the activities planned for the coming week. The provider oversees planning and she makes sure that all six areas of learning are included. Deployment of staff is good in most respects although the grouping of the younger and older children together for circle time is not wholly effective.

Space and resources are well organised. Required documents are in place including attendance records, medication records and accident records. Policy and procedure documents are filed for the staff and children's parents to access. The file includes information about how parents can complain to Ofsted but the contact details are out of date and the procedures for fire evacuation and uncollected children lack detail.

Leadership and management of nursery education is good. The sessions include free play opportunities for the older children in the main hall as well as time for more structured activities in smaller groups in a side room. The provider shares responsibility for leading the structured group work for older children with another member of staff. They plan together to ensure that

the work offered to the children helps them to make good progress towards most of the early learning goals. They maintain brief records of children's progress against most aspects of the six areas of learning. They know the children well and they plan activities that meet their needs.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection three recommendations were made in connection with nursery education. Staff agreed to ensure that the activity plans include all six areas of learning. Staff have adopted a new system of planning that covers all six areas of learning and is shared with parents. Staff agreed to review the format of children's progress records and to ensure that they are kept up to date. The records have been changed and they are updated regularly. However the records still do not include all aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world. Staff were asked to improve story time to sufficiently challenge children to extend their communication, language and literacy skills. Staff share stories with the whole group of children at circle and time and at other times. Circle time is suitably challenging for the older members of the group although discussions that follow are sometimes a little too advanced for the younger children.

There were three actions made in connection with the last care inspection. Staff agreed to keep a written record signed by parents of accidents and this record is now in place. Staff agreed to ensure that the child protection procedure includes what happens if an allegation is made against a member of staff. This procedure document has now been reviewed and improved and all of the required points are included which helps to safeguard the children. Staff agreed to include arrival and departure times in the register of attendance for staff and children. These details are now included although signing in sheets show only first names for children and initials for the staff.

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):

- ensure that the information provided for parents about complaints includes current contact details for Ofsted
- improve the organisation of circle time to enable the younger members of the group to take part fully in stories and discussions
- review and improve the documents that show the procedures to be followed for uncollected children and for fire evacuation

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):

- give children more opportunities to demonstrate their growing independence at snack time and in connection with their creative work
- ensure that records of progress include all aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world.

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