

# North Dorset Childrens Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY336390
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 April 2008
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<b>Registered person</b>	Dorset Sure Start
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

North Dorset Children's Centre nursery opened in 2007 to serve the North Dorset local area. It is overseen by Dorset Sure Start and operates from purpose-built premises within the Children's Centre in Shaftesbury, Dorset. The centre comprises a day nursery which is registered to care for up to 52 children from birth to eight years of age and is open from each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00. An additional crèche operates to support parents and carers attending various adult groups and courses that meet at the centre when required. The children use four playrooms, and enclosed outside and associated facilities.

Currently, the nursery has 40 children aged under five on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for nursery education. The centre supports children who have learning difficulties or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

There is an overall centre manager who is supported a part-time early years teacher and a manager of the nursery. There are five permanent members of staff who work with children in the nursery, of whom four hold a relevant childcare qualification. Further members of staff are

currently undertaking training. Additional staff can be called on to work with children in the crèche.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Sound measures are in place to promote the children's health and fitness. Generally, the staff implement effective procedures to minimise the risk of infection spreading between children. There is a suitable policy for the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious and parents are informed any illness within the nursery. Staff provide individual bedding for each child and ensure that the children wash their hands after playing outside and before eating. Suitable nappy changing procedures are in place but staff do not ensure that the changing area is cleaned thoroughly after use and this increases the likelihood of cross infection. The children frequently play outside and they are protected from the harmful effects of the sun through use of sun hats and cream. All staff hold a suitable first aid certificate and first aid kits are readily available including when the children are on outings. Appropriate written consents for emergency aid are in place and satisfactory accident and medication records are maintained.

The children enjoy a nutritious and balanced diet of food which is freshly prepared on the premises. This includes several portions of fresh fruit and vegetables daily. The menu is displayed so that parents know what their child will be eating. Any specific dietary requirements are respected and clear information about any food allergies or intolerances is displayed in the kitchen. Drinks are always readily available for the children to take independently when they are thirsty. Baby feeds are prepared and stored hygienically.

Full use is made of the outside areas and children are encouraged to play outside in the fresh air every day. The children enjoy this freedom and many choose to play outside much of the time. There is ample room for them to run freely and to use a wide range of equipment, including balls and wheeled toys. They show a growing awareness of space, for instance, as they ride tricycles and scooters, carefully negotiating a course around objects and people, and when they are stacking large plastic crates. Opportunities for more challenging activities, such as using larger climbing equipment, are provided at the nearby park. The children are developing control and coordination of their movements and staff help them to learn new skills, for example, throwing and catching balls or to balance and walk on stilts.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

The nursery operates in a self contained area within the Children's Centre and is linked to a separate crèche room which has its own outdoor area. The premises are welcoming to all and have many displays of children's artwork and boards with information for parents. Parents and children are greeted on arrival and there is a friendly atmosphere. The nursery area is well laid out and allows the children independent access to the toilet facilities and outside areas. There is a wide range of good quality furniture, toys and equipment to support the children's developmental needs. Staff ensure that children only use toys that are safe and age-appropriate. There are many low storage units in all rooms which allow the children to take toys and activities independently and make choices about what they do.

Suitable risk assessments are carried out and appropriate measures are put in place to reduce the likelihood of accidental injury to the children. The premises are kept secure against unauthorised entry and the outside area is well fenced and gated. Risk assessments take place before outings and sound procedures to promote the children's safety are implemented. This includes having a high ratio of adults to children. Sleeping babies are checked frequently to ensure that they are safe and comfortable. The children are generally well supervised, although occasionally for brief periods no adults are present when they are playing outside. Appropriate fire precautions are in place and there are termly fire drills so that staff and children know how to act in an emergency. However, the register is not always completed promptly and therefore at times there is no accurate record of which children are on the premises. Robust procedures are in place to ensure that children are only collected by adults authorised by their parent or carer.

There are comprehensive procedures in place that contribute effectively to safeguarding children from harm. The staff have a clear understanding of their duties and understand how they must act if they have concerns about the welfare of a child in their care. Parents are informed of the staff's responsibilities at the time of placing their child in the nursery. There is a thorough recruitment procedure to ensure that all staff working on the premises are suitable to be with children and unvetted persons have no unsupervised access to them.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are happy and settled and enjoy their time at the nursery. They develop relaxed and warm relationships with the staff. There is plenty of interaction and conversation between them, which supports children's language and communication skills well. The children frequently select books independently and they enjoy sitting and sharing them with staff, either individually or in small groups, reading the story or talking about the pictures. The children's self-esteem and confidence is promoted and they are praised and encouraged and their achievements are valued. For example, their artwork and pictures are discussed, annotated and displayed on the walls.

Independence is promoted throughout the nursery. The children have many opportunities to initiate their own play by selecting toys and activities from the low units. They serve themselves from communal dishes at lunchtime, making choices about what they eat. They learn to put on their own coats and shoes and to manage their own personal care. However, staff are always on hand if assistance is required. Babies' emotional needs are well supported by the staff, who give them cuddles and hold them whilst giving them bottle feeds. They promote continuity in their care by being flexible and are careful to follow babies' individual routines for sleeps and feeds and by respecting their parents' wishes for their care. Each baby has an identified cot so that they feel secure.

There is a wide range of age-appropriate toys and activities to support the development of children of all ages. This includes many resources to encourage hand-eye coordination and the physical skills of the youngest children. The staff plan and provide a variety of experiences for children of all ages and give them many opportunities to investigate the world around them. A young child was examining and picking flowers and plants growing in the outdoor area and older children enjoy exploring materials such as shaving foam, flour, paint and glitter. The staff are enthusiastic about these activities and give children plenty of freedom to become messy. A change of clothes is always available. For the first few weeks after younger children enter the nursery, staff observe and monitor them carefully to ensure that they are settled and feel

secure. However, further observation and record keeping so that staff can continue to track their development is not carried out consistently. Consequently, they cannot be sure that they are making good progress or be certain that they are providing appropriate levels of challenge or support for each child.

### Nursery education

The quality of the teaching and learning is satisfactory. The staff plan a varied programme of interesting activities which support all areas of the curriculum. They review their plans daily and are flexible, altering the topics to take account of the children's interest, for example, in dinosaurs. Much of the day is child-led, with children making decisions about what they do, accessing resources independently and moving freely between the classroom and outside play area. The staff work with individuals and small groups of children during this time, talking with them and asking questions about what they are doing or finding out. They help them learn new skills and extend their knowledge, for example, talking about what plants need to grow. Systems are in place for staff to observe the children and to monitor and record their achievements. However, they do not do this consistently and many records are updated infrequently and do not accurately show what the child can do. Consequently, the staff do not have a clear picture of each child's ability and, at times, they do not support their learning or challenge them appropriately.

Generally, the children are keen to take part in the activities and many show sustained involvement, for example, when painting or making a collage. They play cooperatively together and are helpful and show concern for others, for instance, by giving out the snack or by telling staff if they think another child is upset. The children are confident and readily interact with adults and their peers. They talk about real and imaginary events and many are beginning to develop a wide vocabulary and, for example, use words such as 'splatter' when describing their painting. The children are encouraged to develop good listening skills and staff frequently ask them to describe what they hear, for example, the sound of the shaving foam as it comes out of the can. The staff remind children that they should make eye contact and listen carefully at group times. However, they do not always organise circle activities well. They do not engage the attention of all the children or ensure that they are sitting so they can participate fully and this mars the enjoyment and learning of others.

There are many activities which promote the physical development and hand-eye coordination that children need for drawing and writing skills. The children draw large shapes in shaving foam and flour with their fingers; they use brushes with water in the outdoor area and paint large pictures; they have ready access to papers, crayons and chalk to use for their own purposes. The children use tools such as trowels to scoop up and carry compost in the garden and are developing control and coordination when cutting with scissors. The children enjoy stories and usually treat books with respect. They are learning to use them as a source of information, for example, when talking about different types of dinosaur. They are beginning to count, correctly linking numbers to objects and to recognise and name simple geometric shapes. Staff take opportunities during the children's play to ask them about colours and to count objects. However, these questions do not consistently pose suitable challenges for the child or encourage them to think and solve problems. The children use technology to support their learning and usually have access to a computer. They enjoy using programmable toys, including a model dinosaur.

The children have many opportunities to find out about their community and the wider world. Recent activities have included a topic on mini-beasts and they have just helped to plant a

living willow structure which they are now helping to care for. They go on walks to the countryside and nearby the town. Through discussions with staff, they are learning how to look after their own health. They take part in a 'Wake and shake' session at the beginning the morning and know that it is important to wash their hands so that they do not become ill. The children use their imaginations well in pretend play, recreating situations that are familiar to them, for example, having conversations on the telephone or talking about baking a cake. They take part in many art activities where they have scope to use their imaginations and try out their own ideas using a range of materials. Some children enjoy singing and know the words to familiar songs. During a weekly music session, they use simple instruments and have the freedom to explore them at other times to find out how they work.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children are respected as individuals by the staff who are interested in them and value their achievements. Their artwork is displayed on the walls and they receive praise and encouragement. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem. The children are interested in the world around them and show pleasure and enthusiasm about many of the activities, for example, when they are energetically exploring materials such as shaving foam, paint or flour. The children begin to learn about their own community and the wider world. A wide range of books, toys and resources which show positive images of diversity are in use. The children begin to recognise that all people are different and to find out about the culture and traditions of others, for example, through food, stories and craft activities. This promotes their acceptance of others.

Most children behave very well in response to the consistent and positive strategies employed by the staff. They have high but realistic expectations for the children's behaviour and make sure that they understand what is expected of them. For example, they remind children that they should say 'please' and 'thank you' to others at meal times and that they should sit still and listen quietly at circle times. The children are helped to learn to share and take turns and generally they play cooperatively together. They receive praise and sometimes stickers so that they know when they have done well. Staff work closely with the parents and carers to ensure that there is a consistent approach to behaviour management so that the child clearly understands what boundaries are in place and why. The Children's Centre provides a venue for many parenting and behaviour management courses. Parents often take advantage of these courses and this benefits the children.

The children's individual needs are well met by the staff who establish good two-way communication with their parents from the outset. Parents are very positive about their relationship with the staff and consider that they always have time to talk with them and keep them well informed. There is an effective procedure to help new children settle quickly and staff are careful to make sure that they fully understand each child's routines and needs. This contributes well to ensuring that they feel comfortable and secure. A key person system is in place so that parents have a named person with whom to liaise about their child's care. Daily diary sheets are completed for the children aged under three years and these keep parents informed well about their child's meals, sleeps and activities, furthering continuity in their care. Comprehensive information is available for parents about the nursery, crèche and Children's Centre so that they understand what is on offer for their child and the extended family.

Children who have any specific needs receive good support from the staff. Effective strategies are in place to support any children who speak English as an additional language. Staff make

sure that they know some basic vocabulary available so that they can communicate with a child in their home language. Sound strategies are in place to support any children who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Staff work closely with parents, carers and other agencies to plan, monitor and review children's progress and learning. Speech and language therapists regularly work with individuals or small groups of children within the nursery setting and clinics are held in the Children's Centre where they are readily accessible to parents and others in the community.

The partnership with parents and carers is good and this supports the children's learning and development effectively. Parents are kept well informed about what their child has been doing through informal discussions with staff and weekly home to nursery link books. This is a two-way exchange of information and many parents write about their knowledge of their child and what they have been doing at home. A computer is available in the entrance area so that parents can view photographs of the children at play and leaflets and notice boards give interesting information so that they understand what their children will be doing and why. Staff provide brief reports and arrange meetings with them to discuss their child's progress in more detail. Parents are encouraged to become involved with their child's learning at home. They are informed of forthcoming topics so that they can talk with their child about what they are doing and help them find resources to take into the nursery. There are opportunities for parents to meet with the early years teacher to find out more aspects of the curriculum and techniques used by staff, for example, about the use of phonics.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. There are well defined areas of responsibility within the Children's Centre and nursery and the staff work cooperatively together so that all runs smoothly for the children. The policies and procedures necessary to promote the children's welfare, safety and learning are in place and generally implemented effectively. This includes a complaints procedure and comprehensive staff recruitment and appraisal systems. Staff keep most of the required records but the daily record of children's attendance is not always completed promptly. Minimum qualification requirements are met and appropriate staff to child ratios are maintained and the children receive suitable levels of attention and support. The premises are organised effectively, giving children ready access to the outside areas and providing quiet areas where babies and children can sleep undisturbed. Staff group children appropriately to ensure that their developmental needs are met. A key person system is in place to promote continuity in their care but the key person's role in monitoring and recording the children's development is not fully implemented.

Many children attending the nursery benefit from the services provided by the Children's Centre for families in the local area. These include courses on subjects such as parenting skills and children's early literacy and communication development. There is also a cooking group which promotes healthy eating. The centre employs outreach workers, who are available to support families in the community. It also provides a venue where other professionals, including speech therapists, can work with adults and children. A crèche is sometimes available to enable parents' of young children to attend these events.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The senior staff have a clear vision for the future development of the nursery provision and have action plans in place to help them to monitor progress towards their aims. There is an expanding team at the nursery and additional staff are currently being recruited. Arrangements are in place to identify and support staff members' professional development requirements through mentoring, in-house and external

training. Systems are being put in place to assess, monitor and record the children's progress towards the early learning goals and to help staff plan the next steps in their learning. However, at present these are not fully implemented. Consequently, staff do not have a secure understanding of each children's ability and cannot be sure that the activities and teaching are effective in supporting their learning.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since registration, 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

## **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 register of attendance is completed promptly so that there is always an accurate record of which children are present
- ensure that the nappy changing area is kept clean and hygienic

### **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):

- extend systems for observing and recording the children's development to assist staff when planning the next steps in their learning (also applies to Childcare)
- continue to develop the systems for monitoring and evaluating children's progress towards the early learning goals and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning
- review the organisation of the circle time to encourage children to participate fully



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