

Hobby Horse Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	133593
Inspection date	10 June 2008
Inspector	Gillian Little
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Registered person	Oxford & Cherwell College
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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?

Hobby Horse Children's Centre opened in 1992 and is managed by Oxford and Cherwell Valley College. It operates from a terrapin building within the grounds of the college in Banbury, located near the town centre. The building provides five rooms for different age groups together with an enclosed outdoor play area. The provision serves students and staff from the college and also takes children from the wider community, including neighbouring counties.

A maximum of 62 children may attend the provision at any one time. There are currently 95 children aged from three months to under eight years on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery also cares for children over eight in its after school and holiday facility. The nursery 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.

The provision is open on weekdays all year round, except Christmas, offering full day care from 08:00 until 17:30. During term times a pre-school group is available from 09.00 until 11.30 and

an after school club is available from 15:00 until 17:30. A play scheme is available in the school holidays from 08:00 until 17:30.

The provision employs 21 staff of whom 14, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Up to seven staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children receive a healthy diet as the nursery provides fruit, milk and water which older children can help themselves to when they are hungry and thirsty. Parents provide children with a packed lunch and the nursery is proactive in encouraging healthy eating. Staff offer advice to parents regarding healthy food and discourage fizzy drinks, chocolate and sweets. Babies enjoy their lunch, eating independently when they can, and staff support them well. Information about children with special diets is easily accessible to staff to ensure that they meet children's individual needs.

Good toileting and hand washing facilities are in place. Staff follow hygienic nappy changing procedures and effectively encourage older children to use potties and toilets, and to wash their hands well. The oldest children know about the importance of washing hands before eating and are able to do this independently.

Older children have daily opportunities to play outdoors all year round. They enjoy practising for their forthcoming sports day, keenly joining in with relay races; they hop over small jumps while pretending to be frogs which is a good link to their current topic of 'Water'. Younger children enjoy the outdoor area as they ride tricycles, explore the playhouse and watch aeroplanes fly overhead, supported well by staff. There is a good focus on staying safe in the sun as staff spend time applying sun cream and encouraging children to wear hats and sit in the shade. Babies also have daily access to the outdoor area during fine weather. However, during wet or cold weather opportunities for them to spend time outdoors are more limited. Good facilities are in place to ensure that children can rest and sleep according to their own routines and needs.

Children are able to play in a healthy environment as the premises are clean, although outdoor shoes are worn in the baby room which increases the possibility of cross infection for the youngest children.

Effective procedures are in place to ensure that children receive appropriate care in the event of an illness or accident. For example, health policies are easily accessible to parents and a rolling programme is in place to ensure that staff have first aid certificates.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are able to play comfortably in a welcoming environment as the premises are spacious with appropriate facilities. For example, the baby room is cosy and homely with separate areas for eating, sleeping and nappy changing. Toddlers and preschool children have spacious rooms with attractive displays of their work. All children are able to use a wide range of suitable and safe toys and resources which are easily accessible on low level tables, low-level storage and

the floor. Staff regularly clean toys and check them for damage to ensure that they are safe for children to use.

Children's risk of injury is minimal as staff assess risks well and take effective precautions to prevent accidents. For example, staff supervise children well both indoors and outside and have rigorous procedures to ensure good security at the main door. The outdoor area is fully enclosed and free from hazards and the staff have plans in place to develop this area further.

Suitable fire prevention and evacuation procedures are in place to ensure that children stay safe in the event of an emergency. For example, staff practise fire drills with children on a regular basis to help them learn about safe evacuation.

Children stay safe when away from the premises as staff follow effective procedures such as teaching children about road safety, always having a first aider present and increasing the adult to child ratio.

Children's risk of harm from others is minimised as staff are familiar with possible signs of abuse and have a good understanding of how to record and refer any concerns. Staff undertake training in safeguarding children and hold appropriate clearance checks. Staff who are waiting for checks to come through are supervised effectively by other staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children throughout the nursery show a keen interest in what they do and develop a broad range of skills. Babies enjoy exploring a good selection of objects and activities set out on the floor, including rattles, pots and pans, soft toys, books, a small sandpit and plastic toys. They are very settled, smiling as they play, and enjoy listening to staff singing songs to them. Toddlers become engrossed exploring a range of toy cars, lorries and helicopters set out on a low-level table and are keen to share their interests with their friends and adults in the room. They enjoy singing songs showing that they know some of the words and actions, and settle keenly to other activities such as a play kitchen, toy dinosaurs, a dolls house and water tray. Pre-school children enjoy a wide range of increasingly challenging activities ensuring that they are able to make good progress in all areas of learning. The Fun Club, which provides care for children after school and during school holidays, offers a good range of activities, such as games, art and craft, construction toys and outdoor play. Staff consult children about their ideas for the club and encourage them to contribute their views, ensuring that children feel involved and valued.

Staff throughout the nursery are very supportive and spend most of their time playing with and talking to the children. Frequent and positive discussions encourage children to develop a variety of skills, self-esteem and confidence. There is a settled and happy atmosphere throughout the nursery fostered effectively by the staff's enthusiasm and positive attitudes. Good links between the different classes help children to become confident in developing relationships with other children and adults in the nursery.

Staff caring for babies and toddlers make regular assessments of their progress and share these with parents. They plan activities and experiences in all learning areas to fully support children's development, and they are familiar with the Birth to three framework. A key worker system ensures that all children have one member of staff who oversees their development and welfare,

and for the youngest children that one or two staff are largely responsible for their nappy changing and feeding.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children behave well and are able to share resources and take turns easily. They have a positive attitude to their learning and are keen to engage in activities showing that they can concentrate for sustained periods. They have good opportunities to develop independence, helping themselves to snacks and drinks, taking themselves to the toilet and choosing which activities they would like to do.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals as they are able to engage in a variety of stimulating activities and experiences. Younger children become engrossed in imaginative play in the home corner, 'feeding' their babies and sharing resources. Staff allow them to take the lead in their play while encouraging them to talk about their home lives. Staff encourage children to develop number skills through everyday opportunities, such as counting satsuma segments at snack time. Children enjoy art activities related to their topic work and staff encourage them to label their pictures with their names, effectively using a purposeful opportunity to develop writing skills. Older children become engrossed exploring a water tray which staff have transformed into a pond with toy tadpoles and frogs at different stages and bubble wrap for frog spawn. Visual references displayed close by illustrate the life cycle of a frog and children are able to talk very confidently about this, showing that they have thoroughly absorbed their learning. They show confidence in using a computer and move through the programmes easily. They develop a good understanding of mathematical concepts by playing well-prepared games with staff, such as choosing objects from a bag to represent small, medium and large objects. Staff effectively encourage children to talk about comparisons and ensure that all children who show interest in the activity are included. Children become engrossed making frogs from paper and are keen to show their finished frogs to friends and adults. They then spend time recreating the movements and sounds that frogs make. Children are confident in expressing their own ideas through art and have opportunities to freely choose materials and equipment, confidently explaining what they are planning to do, such as making pictures of rainbows.

Staff support children well engaging them in lots of discussion as they play and ensure that children have lots of praise and recognition for their small achievements. They ensure that children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to take part in the same activities as other children, providing additional support as necessary. Staff are familiar with children's individual abilities and adapt activities accordingly.

Staff plan activities well. Written plans clearly show the learning intentions for each activity and are a useful tool for staff to follow. Clear links to the stepping stones within the Foundation Stage show how children are able to make progress. Topic activities are well linked across all areas of learning ensuring that children are able to revisit and consolidate their learning experiences.

Assessments of children's progress include individual targets and detailed written observations of each child, although the latter are only carried out twice per term. Staff know children well, use their knowledge to plan future activities and ensure that parents are fully aware of children's progress. However, there is little written observational evidence of children's on-going achievements to support staff's overall assessments. The staff and management are fully aware of this and are beginning to develop more regular observations.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop positive attitudes towards diversity as they have access to a good range of resources reflecting different backgrounds. For example, they enjoy creating play dough faces on laminated cards which reflect people from different ethnic backgrounds and they have opportunities to play with dolls with disabilities. Staff help children to learn about different cultures and religions by celebrating a range of festivals, such as St George's Day, Father's Day, the Dragon Boat Festival and Divali. Children throughout the nursery develop good levels of behaviour as staff have a positive and consistent approach and use effective methods, such as gently reminding children how to behave or devising behaviour agreements with older groups of children. Staff work well in partnership with parents when necessary, providing effective support to help manage children's behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is therefore fostered.

Children who speak English as an additional language receive extra support from staff as appropriate; staff liaise closely with parents and learn words in the child's home language to enhance communication skills.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to progress well as staff ensure they are able to participate fully in the life of the nursery and the activities on offer. Staff work effectively with parents and outside agencies to identify, assess, support and monitor children's needs. Staff talk knowledgeably about individual children and obtain additional staffing and training as appropriate.

Children benefit from good continuity between the home and the setting as staff develop excellent relationships with parents. Good information is easily available about the nursery, such as policies, newsletters and notices. Parents are highly complimentary about the nursery stating that staff are very approachable and supportive, helping parents to overcome a variety of problems. Parents frequently recommend the nursery to others and they feel that the nursery is an extension of their family, helping them to feel very secure about leaving their children. Parents state that they are often surprised at how much their children know and that the staff's assessments are an accurate reflection of their children's abilities and characters. For children receiving funding for nursery education, the partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff encourage parents to help their children learn through activities at home, and they provide lots of displays of children's work so that parents can easily see what children have been doing. Parents receive good verbal feedback about their children's progress and are fully aware that they can see their children's development records at any time. However, these records currently lack written observational evidence of children's on-going achievements and progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are able to make good progress throughout the nursery as staff have a strong sense of purpose, keeping children safe, providing a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities, promoting positive social skills in a very welcoming environment, and fostering excellent relationships with parents. The adult to child ratio effectively supports children's care, learning and play throughout the nursery. Staff work closely as a team and are well-organised, sharing responsibilities effectively. They have a very positive attitude towards making improvements and are focused on future development. Staff have effective skills and good levels of

qualifications. Experienced and qualified staff are deployed well throughout the nursery to support other staff.

Appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. However, most records regarding staff recruitment are held by the human resources department at the college and are not available for inspection. All other documentation, policies and procedures are in place and work well in practice.

The quality of the leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff are enthusiastic and are very aware of their roles. There is a very clear management structure through which staff are supported well. The staff and management are fully aware of weaknesses within the provision and are already working towards improvements. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems are in place to ensure that the quality of the nursery education is good.

The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery was asked to ensure that the child protection policy includes details of procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against a member of staff. This is now in place which fully meets the relevant regulation and improves safety for children.

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):

- consider an indoor shoe policy for the baby room and consider ways for babies to spend time outdoors all year round
- ensure that written evidence of staff recruitment is available on the premises for inspection.

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 observational evidence to support assessments of children's progress.

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