

Howe Dell Day Care Provision

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY361200
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Inspector	Hilary Preece / Paula Durrant
Setting Address	Howe Dell School, The Runway, HATFIELD, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AH
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Registered person	The Governing Body of Howe Dell Primary School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Howe Dell Day Care Provision opened in 2007 and became part of a designated Sure Start Children's Centre in February 2008 providing services for under fives and their families. It operates from a purpose built eco-friendly building situated on the site of Howe Dell School on the outskirts of Hatfield town centre. Children have access to individual age-appropriate outdoor play areas, which are fully enclosed and secure. The centre comprises a day care nursery which is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 all year round with the exception of one week at Christmas and the week of August bank holiday; a breakfast club and after school club; and pre-school nursery education and wrap around extended care for those attending pre-school. There is a range of Children's Centre outreach services provided including parent/carer and toddler groups, Rhyme Time, Positive Beginnings, Magic 123, Childminding groups, and Special Needs groups. Additional services include first aid classes for parents, family activities and a summer play scheme.

A maximum of 56 children may attend the day care provision at any one time. There are currently 46 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, four currently receive funding for early education. The centre welcomes children who have learning disabilities and/or

difficulties and who speak English as an additional language. A maximum of 32 children may attend the out of school clubs at any one time.

The Day Care provision and Children's Centre is managed by the Governing Body of Howe Dell School and employ an overall centre manager, an extended services co-ordinator and day care manager. There are currently an additional 15 staff working with the children. Ten staff, including the centre manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and six are studying for qualifications. The setting receives support from the Foundation Stage unit within Howe Dell School.

The inspection included the day care and wrap around provision, the nursery education provided in the pre-school room and the extended services of breakfast and after school clubs.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are well nourished and enjoy a wide range of healthy options for their meals and snacks. Cooked meals provided by the school's catering service are well balanced so children are provided with the necessary foods for good health and growth. Children enjoy the fresh fruit offered for snack and become aware of the importance of such foods on their health through some discussion with staff. Children in the after school club are involved in food preparation. They enthusiastically fill their own sandwich wraps choosing from a range of nutritious fillings. A comprehensive range of breakfast foods is available to appeal to all tastes. Drinking water is available for children at all times. Children stay healthy because all staff follow rigorous hygiene procedures such as wearing gloves and aprons when preparing and serving food.

Children learn the importance of safe hygiene practices. Older children wash their hands independently at appropriate times and staff talk to the children about germs so they become aware of the impact of germs on their health. Younger children use individual flannels, cot bedding and sleeping bags, and staff ensure babies' nappies are changed frequently and follow hygienic procedures. These practices reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Children's individual health needs are met because procedures are well organised. Parents provide information about their children's diet, allergies or medical needs which is carefully displayed on checklists in the appropriate rooms so all staff understand the children's needs. Babies' milk feeds are made up by parents and appropriately labelled and refrigerated to ensure individual feeding requirements are met. Any information regarding health care, medication and accidents is shared appropriately with parents and records are kept. Children receive appropriate medical care because most staff are qualified in first aid treatment for infants and children and first aid supplies are readily available throughout the centre.

Children benefit from some excellent opportunities and resources to promote their physical activity. These include covered areas adjoining the building that allow children to benefit from playing outside in the fresh air in all weathers. Children climb, pedal wheeled toys, push buggies and dig in the sand, which provide varied opportunities to develop strength, gross motor control and coordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are kept safe in a secure environment. Good security systems operate to keep children safe within their rooms and outdoor play areas are securely fenced. Babies are protected from the bigger children running about by having a separate fenced outside play area. Children remain safe because they are supervised closely. For example, groups of children attending the after school club are escorted to different areas by staff who carry out regular head counts and use a radio control to communicate to other staff. This ensures all children are accounted for throughout the session as they move around the school and centre facilities.

Children use high quality furniture and equipment that are kept clean and well maintained. Children access toys easily because they are clearly visible in low-level transparent storage drawers. This helps them develop independence and make decisions in their play. They play safely because furniture such as tables and chairs is of appropriate size to help them feel secure. Children have plenty of opportunity to explore outside apparatus and equipment. They are reminded how to use the equipment safely and develop further understanding of keeping safe through daily routines such as lining up sensibly and holding on to the hand rail when going up and downstairs.

Children remain safe because there are some generally effective procedures in place to protect them. Regular risk assessments and checks of the premises are made to ensure they remain safe and fire evacuation procedures are practised frequently, although there are some inconsistencies in the management of these procedures across the setting. Appropriate vetting of staff ensures they are suitable to work with children. Staff have sound knowledge of how to record and report any concerns about children's welfare to the management who then follow procedures in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines. This ensures children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies and toddlers in the day care provision are cared for according to their personal routines. Information is provided by parents and carers to ensure that individual sleep, toilet and feeding routines are met and regular communication ensures care is adapted as routines change. Information is also gathered initially about children's interests, home language, faith and culture to ensure care is meaningful and matched to individual needs. However, children's records and ongoing observations and assessments of their development are not fully operational yet. This makes it difficult for staff to monitor the progress children are making and plan individually for their next steps. Planning throughout the day care is based on the Early Years Foundation Stage and follows the same topics that are adapted accordingly to broadly match the children's stage of development. This provides some appropriate opportunities and experiences that promote children's overall development.

Children are settled and content. They make positive relationships because staff are interested in what children do and say. This develops children's confidence and helps them feel secure. Younger children are beginning to develop independence when helping to put away toys, sweeping up and washing their hands but opportunities for children to develop independence and learning during snack and meal times are overlooked. For example, children are not given sufficient opportunity and support to prepare and cut up their food or pour their drinks because staff automatically do this for them, and opportunities for counting and problem solving when

handing out food and crockery are missed. This limits children's involvement, independence and learning through daily routines.

Children enjoy exploration and discovery. Babies explore the feel of sticky corn flour and water 'gloop' on their hands and toddlers enthusiastically experiment making loud and soft sounds with multicultural musical instruments. Children relish the exciting opportunities for discovery outside. Some are fascinated by operating a water pump to fill containers so they can water the plants in the growing beds. Some examine feathers they have found and others try to catch rain drops in their hands. These opportunities develop children's natural curiosity as learners.

Children attending the breakfast and after school clubs are enthusiastic and well occupied. There is an air of calm relaxation and healthy social interaction between children and adults. Children make choices in what to do from a wide range of age-appropriate activities. These include art and crafts, construction, sports and using the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) computer suite in the school. There is a weekly Spanish session where children learn simple Spanish greetings and songs. The range of opportunities ensures children across the age range are absorbed in an activity that interests them.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning in the pre-school is satisfactory. Children appear to make sound progress in their learning but observation and assessment records are not sufficiently developed to measure this yet. Staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs to build on this information as starting points for learning. Planning systems are very new and are yet to take account of the uniqueness of individual children and the different rates at which they learn. Access to an extensive range of high-quality resources and support from experienced early years colleagues within the wider school community contributes to the enhancement of the learning environment. Whilst pre-school staff have a solid understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how to teach children through purposeful play opportunities, rigidity of the routine and too much emphasis on adult-led direction restricts children's ability to make choices and to develop independence through experimentation and exploration. For example, colouring 'work sheets' and pre-prepared resources designed by adults are used in wall displays, which means opportunities for children's free expression are restricted.

However, on the whole children are keen to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen with considerable levels of concentration to staff such as when following instructions for making jam tarts within a structured cooking session. Children enthusiastically visit the school library to borrow books and are able to re-tell familiar stories. For example, they demonstrate their creativity in design when drawing associated objects linked to the sequence of the story line 'Whatever Next', a popular children's book that follows the events of a family of bears. Children make marks for a purpose such as when forming shapes to replicate the letters of their names but this is often in direct response to adult instruction rather than spontaneously in play. They use their imagination in role play, construction, drama and music. Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them as they celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year. They gain confidence in using number in their play and respond well to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and some daily routines. Children gain opportunities to develop their physical skills such as through daily access to the garden and regular music and movement sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

An ethos of inclusion and celebration of diversity is evident throughout the school and Children's Centre. Children's ethnic backgrounds are valued and resources and activities positively reflect the local community and wider world. Initiatives that bring the community together such as celebrations for International Week and children in the day care attending school assemblies once a week foster a strong sense of coming together and develop positive attitudes and respect to all. Children's ideas are valued. Those attending the after school club contribute positively towards establishing the Golden Rules and submit ideas through a suggestion scheme. This gives children ownership of their club and develops mutual respect. Children are well behaved and polite. They are supported effectively across all the provision in managing their behaviour. They learn to share and play together and receive plenty of praise and encouragement. As a result, children develop high self-esteem. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are strong relationships between the setting and their parents and carers. Parents and carers are encouraged to attend the outreach services and groups and are given opportunities and support to work within the school and centre to develop their own skills and learning. This builds excellent links between the parents, school, Children's Centre and day care services. Information about children's day-to-day care is shared through daily communication, notice boards and the recent introduction of newsletters. Parents can access the setting's policies on the Centre website.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funded nursery education in the pre-school is satisfactory. Presently, systems do not effectively provide parents and carers with detailed knowledge about the educational curriculum. The 'eco' status of the setting means that printed information and the prospectus is minimal and parents are encouraged to access information on the website. Whilst staff display planning information about topics and themes on notice boards there are limited opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's individual assessment profiles and share their learning progress. The school is working closely with the centre to address this issue but effective systems are yet to be put in place. This has some impact on children's ability to achieve.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The centre shares the inspired vision and enthusiasm of the school for developing joined-up services for children and the wider community. The newly formed centre management team are dedicated to developing the provision and services. Sound recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure that staff are suitably qualified and have relevant experience to work with children. The management recognise that following a period of rapid recruitment staff now need time and support to develop confidence and build strong staff teams in order to provide consistency for the children. The operational plan incorporates some sound policies and procedures. However, there is not yet a system to monitor and evaluate their implementation and as a result, some procedures such as recording of fire drills and daily risk assessments are not consistently applied across the entire setting. This weakens the overall effectiveness of the operational plan.

The leadership and management of the nursery education in the pre-school is satisfactory. Whilst senior staff are dedicated to the concept of providing a high-quality learning environment,

this is yet to be translated into practice with core room staff. Although some more rigorous mentoring structures have been introduced recently these are yet to be effective. New planning and assessment systems, a new staff team and eagerness to come to terms with a new early years curriculum impacts on staff confidence and delivery. Limited emphasis on self-evaluation also means that some weaknesses in delivery of the curriculum have not been identified. For example, evidence from the planning and assessment systems and of children's daily experiences shows that much of children's learning is adult led through planned activities or tasks and does not allow for children to initiate independent learning through free-flow play. Whilst some support has been provided by the school's Foundation Stage unit this has not yet been monitored sufficiently to have a significant impact. As a result, this lack of clarity over leadership roles and responsibilities in a newly developed team means, presently, the leadership and management of nursery education in the pre-school appears to lack direction.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

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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):

- develop further opportunities to promote children's independence at snack and meal times
- develop children's records, observations and assessments to track progress and inform planning for individual needs
- devise a system to monitor and review the operation plan to ensure there is consistency throughout the setting. This refers to written policies and procedures.

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):

- ensure planning and assessment systems capture the uniqueness of each individual child. This refers to greater emphasis on child-initiated learning and differentiation for the younger/less able and older/more able child
- ensure parents receive sufficient information about the pre-school education curriculum and are able to contribute to their child's attainment profile
- review the organisation of environment and routines to promote greater opportunities for independent learning and decision making. This refers to free-flow play
- devise a system to monitor the overall effectiveness and quality of the pre-school educational curriculum.

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