



Rascals Childcare Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY299101
Inspection date	16 September 2005
Inspector	Anita Bartram
Setting Address	Huntingdon Church, Talbot Avenue, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 9HP
Telephone number	01268 786893
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Registered person	Rascals Childcare Ltd
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 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?

Rascal Childcare Ltd is run by Nicola Martin and Jane Bridges. It opened under the current owners in 2005 and operates from a community hall. It is situated in the centre of Rayleigh. A maximum of 28 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.30 to 15.00, for 39 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 76 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 28 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a small number of children with special educational needs, or children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 13 staff. There are 11 staff, including the manager, who hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are 3 staff are working towards a further qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to learn about staying healthy because practitioners encourage children to follow hand washing routines before eating. However, the lack of suitable hot water in all the toilets means cross infection is not thoroughly minimised. Children are well-nourished with a healthy balance of food at snack time. They eagerly choose from either fresh or dried fruit, and many choose healthy drinks such as milk or water. Staff do not always seize opportunities to develop children's understanding of why it is important to eat healthy foods or take part in physical exercise. Children have their health and dietary needs appropriately met. Staff work well with parents to identify individual children's allergies before they start at the group and any medication issues are appropriately recorded and carried out.

Children thoroughly enjoy physical activity both inside and out. Some children rigorously join in the movement to music session whilst others stand to observe before gradually getting involved. Children move rhythmically to music as they Hoover the carpet or carry their dolls during imaginative play. Children are becoming aware that rigorous movement causes them to become 'puffed out' and they seek out a drink of water when they are thirsty. Many children make full use of the developing outdoor play space.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment. Senior staff and management have carried out thorough risk assessments and as a result, all hazards are minimised. Fencing has recently been replaced to enable children to play safely in the outdoor play area. Children confidently manage the uneven surface of the grass as they play outside. As a result, they are beginning to learn about keeping themselves safe. They change the speed they run, slowing down to negotiate the bumps and dips.

Children are cared for by adults who have all been vetted. Staff continue to attend short courses to update their knowledge of more specialised issues such as child protection and special needs. This enables staff to identify any concerns in the early

stages. Children are well protected because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The group operates one afternoon session for two year old children only. Due to the smaller number of children present and the shorter session, children are able to more gently experience the realities of having other adults care for them. The staff who manage this session are sensitive to the emotional needs of the younger children at this time and strive to work in partnership with each child's parents. Staff are developing their practice and are beginning to use the principles behind the 'Birth to three matters' framework. As a result, activities are planned to support the specific developmental stages of children under three.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It enables children to make satisfactory progress in the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage although children's progress in personal, social and emotional development is very good. As a result of high levels of confidence and self-esteem children are enjoying their time at the pre-school. They are developing positive relationships with staff and each other and are developing worthwhile skills in self-control and turn taking. Staff are calm and consistent in helping the children learn about acceptable behaviour. For example, before reading the story staff remind children what 'listening' involves so that children are given the opportunity to learn and act accordingly.

Staff have satisfactory understanding of the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning. However, staff are not sufficiently adapting activities to suit the different stages of children's learning. Focused activities such as creative work and stories are identified to link to the week's theme. However, the short-term planning of these does not provide staff with clear learning objectives to include all children. Extension is not identified to challenge more-able children's learning. Likewise, support for less confident, younger or children with special educational needs is not identified. As a result, it is difficult for staff to readily and purposefully help children take the next steps in their learning. This has a restricting effect on the pace children make progress towards reaching the early learning goals.

Children move around the large hall freely and purposefully. The rolling snack time means children are able to determine when they want a break in their play to have a drink and snack. This provides some opportunity for children to organise their play independently. However, there are not enough opportunities for children to become highly independent by taking the lead in writing their own names, pouring their own drinks, cutting or spreading their own fruit, or using number to calculate for basic purposes. Children's art work is often too adult directed. Whilst making paintings of strawberries, children were not able to determine the colour, size or shape of theirs; as they were given pre-drawn shapes, red paint and herbs to sprinkle on top.

Children make good use of the outdoor play area to enjoy large physical play in the

more open space. They run through the grass to make the crane flies fly up around them and peer over the fence to see what's happening over the other side. Children are not yet able to determine their use of outside play or access the full six areas of learning in the freer and less restrictive environment. Some staff have attended training on 'the outdoor classroom' and are keen to develop this area in the curriculum.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the group. Improvements have been made to the décor of the building and the entrance foyer, and this provides a warm and welcoming environment for the children. Staff are readily available at the beginnings of sessions to support any children who need help to settle. As a result, children come happily into the group and become quickly involved in the ready-prepared activities. Children's behaviour is very good. They are developing a sound appreciation of right and wrong and show good levels of self-control. For example, younger children seek help from staff or older children talk and reason to sort out disputes with their friends. Due to the calm atmosphere and consistent boundaries from staff, children are able to work harmoniously and cooperatively alongside each other.

Children with special educational needs are supported effectively in the group and as a result these children have equal opportunity and access to the whole provision. Staff work to individual education plans devised in consultation between parents and others such as speech and language therapists. This means that the activities children experience are well-suited to progressing them in their development. Support for children who have English as an additional language is not always sufficient. Some staff are aware of important factors such as children's home language or level of understanding whilst others are not. This means key words or one to one support are not used consistently to help children gain the most from their time in the group.

Children have high levels of self-esteem. They confidently decide what they are going to play with or take time to stand and watch before joining in. Children are not always able to be as independent as possible within the activities they choose to do. For example, in preparing their own snack or pouring their own drink. They do not always have a sufficiently wide enough variety of tools accessible to them when designing and making to allow true creativity in activities. Children's independent use of ICT is developing although the computer is not readily available to them at all times. Staff support children in their early writing skills although do not sufficiently encourage them to write for themselves for purpose, such as lists, registers, and messages.

Children ask relevant questions about what they see or want and can ably describe what they are doing. Children are developing positive relationships with each other and staff. Children make good use of the book corner and dressing-up clothes. Within these activities staff have provided an adequate selection of resources reflecting different cultures, gender and abilities. Through these children are

beginning to appreciate and value the similarities and differences between themselves and others. Consequently, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. The open environment, where parents can bring their child right into the group to settle them and chat informally to staff means children are secure and content in the setting. Through informal discussion staff are able to keep updated on children's progress or any concerns parents have. As a result, children receive sensitive and warm care and this has a positive impact on their well-being. There is a wide selection of relevant information displayed for parents in the entrance foyer. Long-term planning is displayed showing the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. Parents are able to see and contribute to their own child's developmental records on a regular basis.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All required documentation, policies and procedures are in place and these are generally carried out well in practice. All the required checks have been completed and this ensures that any adult working with the children is safe and suitable to do so. The majority of staff have childcare qualifications and their professional development is encouraged by management. Staff are supported in keeping their skills up-to-date through short courses. Staff are developing the children's use of the outdoor play area and the management team have worked hard to raise funds to get work completed.

Staff make good use of space. The 'long room' is used for more particular activities relating to children's physical, musical and ICT development. However, now the outdoor area is being developed, management have identified that this room could be used more fully to provide more challenging activities for more-able or older children. Informal plans are in place to improve the use of this room.

The leadership and management of the nursery is satisfactory and the new owners are striving to make improvements to the nursery provision to enhance children's education. However, the short term planning used by supervisors is very limited. This hampers staff in seizing opportunities during activities to help children make progress in targeted areas identified from their assessment records. Staff can generally identify what areas of the Foundation Stage are covered in an activity, but are not able to ensure that children who participate are learning what they need to. The lack of focus in 'special' activities means extension for more-able children or support for younger children is not sufficient.

Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection three recommendations were raised regarding childcare and two regarding nursery education.

With regard to childcare, the complaints procedure is now clearly accessible to parents and Ofsted's contact details have been included. The children's use of the outdoor play space has vastly improved. Structural work has been undertaken to make this area more secure and staff are keen to see this area develop. One member of staff has attended training on developing 'the outdoor classroom' and has already begun to identify how the six areas of the curriculum can be incorporated into the outdoor space. Opportunities for children to use their own ideas during creative activities are still sometimes limited. Staff still tend to dictate what the desired outcome should look like and have not yet developed sufficient questioning skills to help children make observations and interpretations for themselves. However, free-painting opportunities are available at an easel.

With regard to nursery education, staff have given thought to creating more balance in the curriculum so that sessions identified for older children have more practical opportunities for children to learn. However, during other sessions, more-able or older children are not sufficiently challenged to extend their learning. Younger children are now appropriately supported in large group activities such as movement to music or story, where they are able to observe and join in when they feel ready. This means that younger children are not unduly pressured into participating in activities which are beyond their developmental level of understanding. Staff understanding of how they can be more pro-active in challenging and extending children's learning during play and practical, everyday situations has improved. The majority of staff now generally ask more meaningful questions whilst children play.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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 effective measures are in place to prevent the spread of cross infection, with particular reference to staff and child hand washing procedures

- develop the children's full use of the outdoor environment all year round

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):

- encourage children to become more independent in their learning
- develop the short term planning, to enable all staff to be aware of learning intentions within activities which are best suited to different children present, for example for more-able, less confident or children who have English as an additional language.

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