

Cortonwood Childrens Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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Type of setting

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

Cortonwood Children's Centre 'Smarties Playgroup' was registered in 2009. The centre is managed by the school and provides an integral element of the school's foundation stage provision. The centre budget is funded by Sure Start, but all staff are employed by the local authority. Children attend for a variety of sessions and are from the local area. The centre is based in the school grounds and has disabled access. A Sure Start Family Support Worker and an Outreach worker are also based there. They provide a range of services for parents and children, including Stay and Play sessions, Bumps and babies, Tricks and Tumbles and baby massage. A Community Nurse provides a breastfeeding 'drop in' session for new mothers and a childminding network group also meets in the centre.

The centre playgroup is registered to care for 24 children, aged two and three years, and there are currently 22 children on roll. Sessions are offered each morning from 9.00 to 11.00. The centre provides support for children with special educational needs. Children attending the playgroup are cared for in one classroom and have access to a large, fully enclosed outdoor play area. A breakfast and lunch club, operating from 8am to 9am and 11.30pm to 12.30pm, are provided in the centre by the school, to extend the flexible provision for foundation stage children. After school care is also offered in the centre by different registered provider.

There are three staff employed to work directly with the children, all of whom hold an appropriate early years qualification. Staff are currently undertaking the Basic Skills quality assurance scheme, 'Quality Mark'. A lead teacher is based in the centre to support the playgroup and develop staff practice. The lead teacher also provides support for a range of private and voluntary settings, in the Rotherham area, to deliver the early years' foundation stage.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The well planned and stimulating play environment is very inviting to young children. Their individual needs are well known, enabling staff to plan very effectively for good progress in all the areas of learning. High priority is given to nurturing children's personal and social skills and their individuality is strongly valued. Parents, as active partners in planning for learning, are encouraged to share children's interests and home experiences. Children are safeguarded and their welfare is successfully promoted. Staff access well planned training opportunities and are developing a highly reflective approach to their practice. A formal process of self evaluation is emerging as an ongoing development tool, to support continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- continue to develop the self evaluation process, as an ongoing basis for reflective and improving practice
- enhance use of positive images in the daily environment, to promote children's awareness of difference and diversity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Leadership and management in the centre is strong. Staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities, so that children are protected and cared for in a safe and secure environment. Procedures to ensure the safeguarding of children meet all required duties and management responsibilities are clearly established. Detailed risk assessments are displayed in all areas of the setting. They are carefully considered to ensure that children remain safe, both indoors and outdoors. All records, policies and procedures reflect current requirements and are shared with parents. They are implemented effectively to ensure children's welfare is fully promoted and their individual needs are met.

Key staff establish the beginnings of a close partnership with parents before children attend, finding out about their individual needs and starting points. Parents are encouraged to share their children's interests, using 'possible lines of direction' planning sheets, which help them become more familiar with the type of activities supporting all the areas of learning. Staff liaise daily with parents to keep them fully informed about all aspects of their child's welfare. They share information about planned activities, for example, new songs, so that parents can enjoy learning with their child. Staff interact constantly with children, talking all the time about their home and family, valuing their individuality and helping them feel secure and included. Written questionnaires are regularly used to seek parents' feedback about centre practice and developments. There is clear awareness of the importance of close liaison and planning for continuity in care and learning where children attend other settings.

Staff are very enthusiastic and have high expectations for children. There is a clearly shared vision for future developments. Rigorous monitoring and reflective practice are becoming strongly established within the setting. Staff have begun a formal process of self evaluation. They are now considering how to ensure this becomes fully effective as an ongoing development tool, so that action planning is consistently well focused to bring about continuous improvement in the outcomes for children. Staff have a clear understanding of the ethos and requirements of the early years framework. This is fully reflected in the stimulating and enabling environment created, both indoors and out, which promotes children's independent learning. Imaginative resources and planned activities support all areas of learning. Strong teamwork, together with clear identification of training and development needs, is helping the setting build on its significant strengths and clearly supports the capacity for continuous improvement. For example, recent enhancements to the outdoor area significantly increase challenge and extend play choices.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children settle well and are happy in the centre. They enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff, so that they feel able to express their own needs and confidently seek support as they play. High priority is placed initially on developing children's personal and social skills. Children become familiar with routines, learning independence skills, like putting on their own coats and finding aprons for painting, and discovering where to find and how to use tools and resources to support their independent play. They learn to wash out their own paint pots, spontaneously wash their hands for 'rolling' snack and help tidy away the toys before group time. Children are constantly praised and their achievements valued, helping them develop an understanding of expected behaviour, like being kind, sharing toys and taking turns.

Staff support children's learning with clearly planned activity ideas, which develop their language and awareness of number, broaden their understanding of the wider world and stimulate their creativity. They interact well with children in their spontaneous play, consolidating understanding and promoting new learning. Staff use spontaneous and focused observations consistently to help in planning next steps, so that activities are appropriate to each child's stage of development. They record and track children's progress systematically. Children's ideas and interests are reflected well, through observations, in day-to-day planning. They are able to select resources and activities freely to plan their own play. This encourages children to make choices, solve problems and extend their thinking independently.

The environment is clearly planned to provide excellent stimulus for all areas of learning. Staff are very imaginative in the ways they engage children's interest. For example, a 'dark den' captures children's imagination about nocturnal creatures and hibernation. They re-enact the story of the 'Bear Hunt' in their small world play. They sing and count out the 'five little ducks went swimming one day' on the 'pond'. Books are used skilfully to enhance stimulus in all the areas. Children love stories, learning to sit and listen well. They learn to recognise their name, as they register their arrival, and have lots of opportunity to mark make and use writing for real purposes, like making up shopping lists in the outdoor den. They become interested in numbers and sounds, acting out rhymes with lovely props. They freely explore shape, size and volume in their construction and exploratory play.

Children develop good levels of concentration and learn to use whole environment very effectively, loving the opportunity to flow freely into the entrancing outdoor environment. Displays imaginatively reflect children's activities and delightful photograph books enable parents to share their child's experiences. A good range of resources is available to reflect difference and diversity, but positive images are not consistently provided in the daily environment, to prompt children's spontaneous interest and curiosity about the wider world and other cultures. Strong emphasis on respecting difference and promoting inclusion, however, underpins all planning.

The outcomes for children are promoted well in the centre. Staff raise their

awareness of the importance of exercise and fresh air, making sure they enjoy time being active outdoors each day. They love the freedom of the outdoor space, as they venture over the bridge, clamber up the rope ladder to the slide and balance on the log stepping stones. Staff encourage them to think about how to keep themselves safe and healthy, talking about why they must not run indoors and the need for good hygiene practice. They develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem in an environment where staff clearly put their needs first.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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