



Sure Start Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	317612
Inspection date	08 November 2005
Inspector	Stephen Andrew Blake
Setting Address	Howgill Family Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7QW
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Registered person	The Howgill Family Centre
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?

The Sure Start Children's Centre was established within the Howgill Family Centre in September 2000. Located within the centre of Whitehaven, the provision serves children from the immediate urban and extended rural areas.

Sure Start Children's Centre is registered to provide full day care to a maximum of 20 children aged from 2 years to under 5 years each weekday during school term times. The centre is also registered to provide Out of School care (Breakfast and After

School Club) to 16 children aged 5 to under 8 years (although older children may attend) each weekday during school term times. Sure Start Children's Centre also provide a Holiday Play Scheme to 16 children aged 5 to under 8 years (although older children may attend) during school holidays.

Children have access to the main playroom, toilets, reception area, kitchen and a secure outdoor play area.

There are 30 children on roll and of these, 14 children are in receipt of grant funded Nursery Education. The Sure Start Children's Centre accommodates children with special needs and there are two children for whom English is an additional language.

The Sure Start Children's Centre employ a total of 21 staff. Staff hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff implement written procedures effectively, for example, when preparing tables for snacks, encouraging children to wash their hands, and in providing a clean and well maintained environment. Staff model good health and hygiene practices and this helps children to stay healthy.

Children enjoy a good range of age appropriate and well-planned indoor and outdoor activities because staff have a good understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff use their knowledge and understanding to ensure they provide age appropriate challenges which promote children's good health. For example, younger children enjoy opportunities to push and pull the sit and ride toys, whilst older children carefully manoeuvre a loaded wheelbarrow around an obstacle course. Children also enjoy well-planned opportunities to develop their fine motor skills, for example, when completing puzzles and using funnels to fill containers in the sand tray. This helps them to stay healthy.

Children's individual needs are effectively monitored by staff. They encourage children to dress themselves appropriately, for example, when putting on their coats and wellies to play in the rain. Snacks are well balanced and take into account children's dietary and cultural requirements. Children understand their bodily needs and eat and drink when hungry or thirsty. They understand the importance of healthy eating because staff provide nutritious eating options and explain the importance of healthy eating to them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a well-planned, secure and spacious environment where risks are generally identified and minimised, for example, through regular and

well-documented risk assessments. There are accessible electric leads in the main playroom and staff do not check the outdoor area prior to use. This compromises children's safety.

Children have opportunities to participate in a range of activities because staff plan these and make resources accessible. This includes planned opportunities for children to rest in areas away from those who wish to be active. This enables children to stay safe. Through careful selection of resources and effective planning of activities, staff have achieved a balance between freedom and setting safe limits. This means that children can choose from a range of activities appropriate to their needs whilst moving around safely, freely and independently.

Staff provide a range of good quality toys and equipment which meets safety standards. They carefully monitor children's choice of these resources to ensure they are appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Children stay safe because staff have established generally effective written policies and procedures and implement these sensitively, for example, in behaviour management and through good adult-child supervision ratios. Children do not have sufficient opportunity to practice the emergency evacuation procedure, there is no fire blanket in the kitchen and the fire extinguishers have not been checked within a twelve month period. This means that some systems for monitoring fire safety are ineffective. The system for alerting staff to the sound of the telephone when the office is not staffed is ineffective. This means that staff are not always aware that parents are trying to contact them about their child and this compromises children's safety. Staff hold valid first aid certificates and there are good systems to ensure that the medical needs of all children are identified and met. Staff have a good understanding of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board child protection procedures and this helps to ensure that children stay safe.

Children have a very good relationship with the adults caring for them. They approach staff confidently for comfort and support when needed. Staff participate in children's activities, for example, during role play and respond warmly, offering advice, praise and encouragement. This helps children to feel secure and enables them to stay safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle quickly on arrival in the warm and welcoming environment. They relate well to each other and socialise through a good range of opportunities provided by staff, for example, during snacks and circle time. Children are able to select from a range of accessible resources or choose to rest because staff have planned the environment well. This helps children to enjoy and achieve.

Staff effectively use their knowledge and understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. They use their understanding of child development to plan activities and resources that are accessible and age appropriate in accordance with individual children's abilities. They carefully monitor

the impact of planned activities to ensure that all children enjoy and achieve.

Children are engrossed in activities and use their imagination effectively as they play together, for example, when dressing up in the home corner and using chalks to create their bonfire pictures. They have a good relationship with staff and respond warmly to them, for example, by proudly showing them their completed pictures. Staff are interested in individual children and interact with them effectively through role play, for example, when playing lions in the outdoor area and in discussions at snack time. This helps children to enjoy and achieve.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have created a warm and stimulating environment conducive to early learning. This means that children enjoy their surroundings and are keen to learn. Children are inspired by a good range of stimulating, relevant activities related to their needs. They access a good range of well chosen resources which support their learning across all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff provide children with a good level of support and encouragement. This means that children are eager to learn, self assured in their play and confident to try new planned and impromptu learning experiences, for example, when enjoying the wind, rain, hail and sunshine whilst wearing appropriate clothing and using umbrellas. Staff plan interesting activities and adapt these to meet individual needs and abilities. Children use marks readily to represent their ideas and older children are beginning to write their own names. Good use of visual symbols and simple sign language enables children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language to participate fully in the activities and make good progress. Children use their imagination well as they create individual art work and use a range of musical instruments to explore and create sound. They interact with each other very well as they engage in imaginative role play. Children are developing a good understanding of the world around them as staff plan outings to a range of interesting locations. They are inquisitive and fascinated by concepts of volume as they pour sand and fill a range of containers.

Children work well together, for example, when pushing and pulling outdoor equipment, engaged in role play and when helping to tidy away. Children gain confidence in using numbers in their play and respond enthusiastically to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and daily routines. Their physical skills develop and improve through a wide variety of experiences.

Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs and build on this information effectively to help children achieve as much as they can. A flexible approach to planning and a good balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff use questions very successfully to challenge children's thinking and language skills.

Staff use generally effective short, medium and long term plans to implement children's learning. They have effective systems to observe, monitor and record what children do well. The systems for identifying unmet individual learning needs, recording assessments and for planning experiences that help children take the next

step in their learning is not robust. Staff have an appropriate understanding of the Foundation Stage and of how children learn effectively but have not attended training relating to the Foundation Stage curriculum for the past two years. This means that staff miss opportunities to stay up-to-date regarding developments in the delivery of children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enjoy attending Sure Start Children's Centre because staff value and respect their individuality and this helps them to make a positive contribution. Children behave very well towards each other and staff implement age appropriate and sensitive behaviour management strategies. Children have a good understanding of right and wrong as staff offer gentle reminders to care for each other and ask children to help them in their task.

Children are able to make a positive contribution because staff have a good understanding of special needs. Staff work closely with the centre's Special Needs Coordinator and outside agencies to support parents in establishing appropriate strategies to ensure that the needs of their child are identified and met.

Staff have a good understanding of equal opportunities. They work effectively with parents of children for whom English is an additional language to identify children's individual needs, inform parents about their child's learning and work in accordance with parental wishes. This enables children to make a positive contribution.

Staff provide all children with a range of planned opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them, for example, through visits to local places of interest and by celebrating cultural events such as the Chinese New Year and Christmas. This approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Staff have a very good partnership with parents. Parents find staff approachable, able to maintain confidentiality and are confident in the ability of staff to meet the individual needs of their child. Staff communicate effectively with parents and provide them with a good range of verbal and written information about the setting, for example, in making policies and procedures accessible, displaying staff information on the noticeboard and when conducting pre-admission home visits to all children. This helps children to make a positive contribution.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced because staff demonstrate satisfactory leadership and management and are generally well organised and clear about their roles and responsibilities. Children are welcomed and at ease in the spacious environment. The premises are well organised. Indoor and outdoor opportunities are planned to

maximise play opportunities for children. This enables them to initiate and extend their own play and experiences.

Policies and procedures are well written and generally implemented effectively to promote the welfare, care and learning of children. They are accessible to parents to keep them well informed about the service and their child's activities.

The system for exchanging information with parents is effective. This contributes to the continuity of children's care. All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and wellbeing are in place. Planning systems are generally well monitored to keep children safe, for example, the planning of activities and appropriate supervision ratios.

Children benefit from well qualified staff who are effectively supervised and inducted. Staff are committed to improvement and development through attendance at relevant child care related training courses. Overall, the provision meets the needs of children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous day care inspection the setting was asked to: ensure that all staff at the Out of School Club have access to a written procedure which is agreed with the schools regarding the collection of children; inform Ofsted when proposing to appoint a new manager; and keep a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children. The setting was also asked to make available to parents a written statement that provides details of the policies and procedures and care and activities provided, improve the range of toys and resources to support children's understanding of Equal Opportunities and review the provision of water for children during playtimes.

The setting has now ensured that staff at the Out of School Club has access to a written procedure which is agreed with the schools regarding the collection of children. Procedures for the collection of children on both minibuses are clear and well written and these are stored in the staff office and taken with staff when using the minibuses. A system is now in place to ensure that Ofsted are informed of any future changes to the management post and staff keep a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children.

The setting has also made good use of its parent notice boards to display a written statement that provides details of the policies and procedures, care and activities provided, ensured the provision of toys and other resources to support children's understanding of Equal Opportunities and ensured that drinking water is accessible to children at all times.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report since 1st April 2004.

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.

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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 compliance with any recommendations made by the fire officer re: the frequency of emergency evacuation practices, the regular maintenance of fire extinguishers and the provision of a fire blanket in the kitchen
- ensure that hazards to children on the premises, both inside and outside, are minimised. re: the removal of debris before children use the outside area and the accessible electric leads in the play room
- review the system for managing the telephone so that staff are alerted at all times when the telephone rings
- review the system for ensuring that staff have an appropriate understanding of special educational needs.

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):

- review the system for staff training and development. This needs to ensure that staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and awareness of the Foundation Stage Curriculum
- review the systems for identifying children's individual learning needs and the planning to enable children to take the next steps in their learning
- review the system of assessment so that staff are able to identify when learning has been achieved throughout the year.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and*

concerns about inspectors' judgements which is available from Ofsted's website:
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