



Lancaster University Pre-School Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	309552
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Inspector	Lesley Ormrod
Setting Address	Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 4YW
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Registered person	Lancaster University Pre-School Centre
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Lancaster University Pre-School Centre is run by Lancaster University. It opened in 1992 and operates from eight rooms in a purpose-built building. It is situated on the campus of Lancaster University on the outskirts of Lancaster. A maximum of 158 children may attend the centre at any one time. The centre is open each weekday from 08.15 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. All children share access to five secure

enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 163 children aged from birth to under 8 years on roll. Of these, 51 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area as most of their parents or carers travel in to work at the university. The centre currently supports children with special educational needs, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The centre employs 40 childcare staff and 2 non-childcare staff, of these, 38 including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health needs are known as the staff discuss these with parents, record administration of medication and accidents correctly and carefully observe any particular medical needs such as allergies. The needs of sick children are managed well as arrangements are clearly specified with guidance provided to parents. Children are developing an understanding of good personal care routines as 3 and 4-year-olds readily identify when they need to go to the toilet and manage their own care. They are consistently reminded to wash their hands before snacks and meals, and most can decide when their hands are clean, although their understanding of how this promotes their good health is not fully promoted. Younger children's personal care is managed well by staff as they appropriately use protective clothing and disposable items, although the existing arrangements for the disposal of nappies result in room odours at times. Children's rest routines are known and met as the staff liaise closely with their parents, although the sleep room checks are not recorded in writing during the period of sleep.

Children enjoy a good selection of healthy food options for lunches as menus have been completely reviewed in consultation with parents and staff and a range of nutritional choices offered. Their understanding of making healthy food choices is developing at lunchtimes as they discuss with the staff what they have chosen and which food items they like best. They decide which of the salad items such as carrots, cucumber and tomatoes are their favourites and tuck into vegetable lasagne with French bread and butter. Babies have a good level of attention at meal times as the staff encourage their self-feeding and drinking skills. Pre-school children's opportunities to make healthy food choices and develop their social skills at snack times are not promoted as they are offered a biscuit each time and sit in a large circle group. Children's dietary needs are known as these are discussed with parents and lists are available to all staff.

Most children have insufficient opportunities to be healthily active during sessions as staff do not plan to provide a regular variety of daily physical activities. A small group

of children do access daily opportunities to be active, as their allocated staff proactively identify that children benefit from fresh air and a chance to be active. They enjoy the fun of spontaneous run-and-chase games with the staff, develop their large motor skills as they climb on the frame and their coordination skills as they ride on the bikes. Some younger children can explain how they feel sweaty after exercise and what happens to their noses, although generally children's understanding of why exercise is good for their bodies is not promoted by staff. Pre-school children usually access an hour of physical activity a week at the gym on the campus but otherwise do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their physical skills through a planned programme and access to appropriate equipment. Babies and children under 2-years-old are encouraged to develop their mobility skills as they use the push-and-pull items, find out how to balance holding on to the walkers or learn to crawl as they reach for their favourite toys.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children develop their confidence and independence as they are able to move freely and safely about in the large, spacious rooms to make their free choices of play activity. Pre-school children choose to use the computers to run a software programme and visit the art area to make a winter collage picture whilst babies develop their exploratory crawling skills as they move safely around on the carpeted area to reach an interesting toy. Children's understanding of how it helps their safe play if they tidy up at appropriate times and their care for their resources and environment are not consistently encouraged by staff. Their independent play ideas are developing as some resources, books and equipment have been made more easily accessible. Pre-school children do not have sufficient access to displayed numbers, letters and text within their rooms that they can refer to as they play and learn. Children are cared for in an environment that has many bright, colourful topic displays throughout the areas, although children's own work is too often set within pre-determined staff models.

Aspects of children's safety are thought out as there are sound risk assessment procedures for the rooms and interior environment, with actions implemented such as providing radiator covers and door jamb protectors. Their knowledge of how to stay safe in an emergency is developing through taking part in fire evacuation practices based on the displayed fire procedures. The safe care arrangements for children are not sufficient to ensure that they are adequately supervised at all times as there are times of the day when the organisation of the deployment of staff is unsatisfactory. Children's security on the premises is considered carefully by staff as the exit doors are secure, the access of visitors to the premises is monitored and policies and procedures for health and safety are shared with parents. Pre-school children's understanding of safe play is encouraged to an extent by staff as they plan some structured activities that include an aspect of safety, such as, who should use sharp knives when cutting citrus fruits.

Most arrangements to protect children are in place as the child protection procedures are shared with parents, although the statement about handling allegations is not in

place. Their welfare is safeguarded as staff have a sound knowledge of how to apply the procedures and what to be aware of when caring for children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's imaginative play is developing as staff are beginning to facilitate more opportunities for all groups to make choices about their play activities and to freely access a range of resources to stimulate their ideas and learning. Young 2-year-olds thoroughly enjoy handling yellow gloop and finding out how to move the toy vehicles along in the substance. They explore natural substances such as pasta and rice flour. Babies have a variety of exploratory toys to investigate and develop their sensory skills as they find out how to make sounds on the xylophone. Children aged under 3-years old are generally becoming more self confident in making their choices of activity and developing their enjoyment of play, as staff give increased thought to making a range of resources easily accessible.

Younger children's achievements are partly assessed as the staff complete the 'All about Me' booklets and carry out occasional formal observations but this information is not systematically used to plan to help individual children make progress. Their developmental learning needs are not met through the existing planning as this is limited to identifying a daily activity linked to the theme. Younger children's need to access planned activities and play opportunities that promote their developmental progress has been identified by the manager who has prepared suitable materials based on the Birth to three matters framework but has not yet implemented the use of these. Babies' routines and experiences are not reported in written form individually to parents as staff record all information on a master sheet displayed in the room for parents to look at. The needs of children with English as an additional language are not fully provided for as staff give insufficient thought to enabling their access to the activities and experiences of the sessions.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals, although at times they are underachieving as staff do not consistently extend their knowledge and provide sufficient challenge in activities and group times. Their learning needs are understood by the manager as she has a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage but the staff responsible for the planning and those working with the children are not fully secure in their knowledge of how to identify and plan to meet children's individual learning needs. Children's learning experiences are planned for at a basic level by the designated staff who liaise with the other staff members for ideas, although the planning is not informed by what each child needs to learn next or has already achieved, and the effective use of informal observations. Their access to a good range of free choice areas such as the home corner, mark-making area and tactile exploration is provided for, although staff skills in interacting to enhance and support the play and learning are not sufficiently developed to fully extend children's achievements. Not all children have access to focussed activities during sessions and monitoring of their take-up is yet to be

implemented. Their learning from the focussed activities, such as finding out how to measure the rain water they collect is not extended by defining the key vocabulary, groupings and differentiating the expectations of less able and more able children. Children's achievements are assessed each term as staff use the teacher-team formats for assessing progress against the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Their progress is not at times sufficiently supported through maintaining adequate staff-to-child ratios.

Children are well behaved and show understanding of right and wrong as they interact together in their play. They learn how to share with each other as the staff skilfully encourage their understanding of respecting each other's needs. Children interact well with each other, listen to each others' ideas eagerly and contribute their own confidently. They readily seek out each other to share experiences and play. Children persist with their imaginative ideas as they create Thunderbird models with the large slot-and-fix construction pieces and decide what varieties of cakes they will make from the sand, although at times the resourcing of the free play areas is too limiting. They are confident and can contribute their ideas for songs to sing or sing a solo when asked to. Their independence skills are developing well as they try hard to put their coats on and manage the fastenings, although there are insufficient opportunities at snack times for developing their self help skills. They relate to staff and at times show staff what they have achieved, although the key worker system is not fully effective in fostering strong relationships. Children are active as they move around the large rooms and readily show each other how they can jump or walk backwards. Their development of large and small motor skills is not sufficiently promoted through the planned physical programme or the available large equipment resources. They can find their personal space when asked to line up and can negotiate their own space with each other when free playing.

Children can form recognisable letters and some numerals as they freely write in the mark-making area. They can ascribe meaning to their writing and some are able to competently name letters of the alphabet as they write their names. Children are developing their skills in linking sounds to letters as they recognise when words sound the same, although their use of these skills is not fully extended by staff within the free play or focussed activities. Their grip and grasp skills are good when using mark makers, although there are insufficient opportunities for them to write for a purpose in areas such as the home corner. Children can chat confidently using a good range of language, vocabulary and sentence construction when interacted with, although their thinking and recall skills are not promoted fully in story times or discussions. Their thinking skills are good when interacting with each other as they decide how they will do something and spur each other on as they add their individual ideas. They debate with each other as to where the play figures will go in the rooms of the play house or which toy people need a rest in the beds. They enjoy books and readily choose to sit and read together. Children count confidently to twenty and beyond, and competently use number language and skills in their play together. They agree with each other how many of each type of turtle and fish they have found in the water play trough, order by size as they compare their finds and decide together that two toy people can fit in a large bed. Their understanding of calculation is developing as they can add a number on to make a total or decide how many more chairs they need for all to sit down. Children's mathematical skills are not

fully extended in daily routines or through access to sufficient resources, number displays and staff support in the numeracy based areas. Their skills in using information and communication technology are good as they competently use the mouse to run a computer programme or make up pretend conversations with their parents using the mobile telephones.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play equally together without bias as they share their resources and listen with eager interest to what each other has to say in their free play. Older pre-school children show good care for younger ones and help them with their play as they explain what the story might be from the pictures in a book. They know that each person is different but equally valued as they recognise and accept each other's various cultural heritages and traditions. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children's individual needs are known as parental information is collected and recorded at admission. Their awareness of celebrations and traditions is encouraged as they make Bonfire Night pictures, prepare for their Christmas concert and chat about Eid, although their wider understanding of diversity and disability is not fully promoted. They participate in events to help others as crèche children are assisted to make cakes to sell for the Children in Need day. Children with special needs are given good support as the special educational needs coordinator is highly effective and committed to providing appropriate input in consultation with their parents and other professionals to help them make progress.

Children's behaviour is managed well across the nursery as staff use appropriate strategies and promptly intervene to provide support when needed. Older children understand why it is good to share whilst babies are consoled sympathetically when they become fretful. Children have some understanding of when to use 'please' and 'thank you', although their use of social manners is not always consistently encouraged in routines such as snack times.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. The provision for children at the nursery is shared with their parents through a comprehensive range of information such as newsletters, the pre-school handbook, that includes a summary of the policies and procedures and welcome packs. Children's planned experiences and activities for their nursery education sessions are not shared with their parents as the displays omit to include information about the planning. The arrangements to meet children's needs by developing the partnership with parents are being progressed. The manager is strengthening parental involvement through discussions about their more active input into the centre. The provision for children is valued by parents who speak very positively about the nursery and its staff, and feel that their children make good progress. The documentation about children's care in the event of a complaint is not fully in place as a complaints record is yet to be established. Information about children's daily care and experiences is passed over verbally to parents at handovers, although there are no arrangements in place to meet regularly with the parents of pre-school children to report and share progress. Suggestions for children

to bring in resources from home such as items for Rassha Bandhan or Ramadan activities to promote the shared learning are asked for in newsletters, although there are no regular arrangements to collect parental information about their knowledge of their children's progress to inform planning.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Children are cared for by staff who are well qualified and experienced as their suitability to work with children is checked and managed competently through robust recruitment procedures. The quality of the provision for children has been accurately assessed by the manager with clear identification of the strengths and weaknesses, although most targets to address the weaknesses have not yet been completed. Leadership and management of the nursery education provided for pre-school children is satisfactory as they make acceptable progress towards the early learning goals from their learning experiences within the resourced, free choice areas and focussed activities, although the manager has yet to implement systems to monitor and develop the quality of teaching, and review the depth of the planning to fully extend and challenge all children's learning.

The arrangements to meet children's individual care needs are in place as parental information is collected and recorded in good detail on the registration forms, although there is no cohesive system set up to share information with parents about their children's daily routines and activities. The developmental learning needs of children under 3-years-old are not systematically planned for and met as there are organisational weaknesses in the arrangements made to promote their progress.

At times during each day, children do not receive an appropriate level of staff support to meet their safe care and learning needs, as the overall management of the deployment of staff fails to ensure that the staff-to-child minimum ratios are maintained in the various rooms and areas used. This means that overall the needs of all children who attend are not met.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care and nursery education inspections recommended that the setting should develop the provision for children by ensuring that: there is appropriate storage space with a balanced range of equipment throughout; all children have access to drinking water with staff-to-child ratios maintained during the preparation of meals and all records of accidents to children are signed by parents. There were also points for consideration made that the setting should review the organisation and accessibility of two book areas and the staff support to children during problem solving activities in the numeracy areas.

Children's access to appropriate storage space and a balanced range of equipment has been partially achieved as the manager has made progress in providing easily accessible storage facilities in some rooms and provided sufficient equipment in all areas. Their need to have ready access to drinking water has been met as parents

send in bottled water that staff make easily accessible. The arrangements for children's care by maintaining staff-to-child ratios during the preparation of meals were addressed by the employment of lunch time staff, although the deployment of staff continues to result in the minimum staff-to-child ratios not being met at times during the lunchtime periods. Children's safe care has been improved as parents are asked to sign all accident records.

Children's access to the book areas in the pre-school rooms has been improved as the manager has provided accessible storage, although the quantity and variety of books available continues to be limited. Their mathematical skills have not been supported by providing staff support in the numeracy based areas.

Complaints since the last inspection

For the reporting period commencing 01/04/2005 Ofsted has received two complaints. The first complaint related to National Standard 13: Child Protection. The complaint related to an allegation made about inappropriate behaviour by a staff member. Information was passed to the Social Services Department who agreed that the registered provider should carry out an investigation. The investigation reports were considered by the Social Services Department and seen by Ofsted and judged to be satisfactory. As a result of the complaint, one action was set that the registered provider review staffing levels when escorting children. The provider has met the action by reviewing the staffing levels and establishing a clear procedure to be followed when escorting children.

The second complaint related to National Standard 12: Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers and National Standard 7: Health. The complaint related to an allegation that following an accident causing a serious injury to a child, no arrangements were made with the parent to discuss the accident and give an explanation of what had happened, or to provide the accident record for the parental signature. Ofsted carried out an investigation on 22/09/2004. Conflicting accounts were provided in relation to the concerns raised. As a result of the investigation six actions were agreed: to record staff and children's attendance accurately; risk assess the use of the sports hall and the use of gym balls; record any accidents and obtain parental signatures; obtain written parental permission for outings; include the contact details for the regulator on the complaints policy and notify Ofsted of any significant events. The provider has satisfactorily met all six actions set.

The provider remains qualified for registration.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that the developmental learning needs of children under 3-years-old are promoted by organising and implementing planning systems based on the Birth to three matters framework, and develop a system to share information with parents about their children's daily routines and activities
- ensure that children receive an appropriate level of staff care and support by reviewing the staff deployment arrangements to meet the required staff-to-child ratios at all times in the various rooms and areas used.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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):

- extend children's knowledge and understanding of healthy living by developing their opportunities to be physically active through a planned programme of activities with access to suitable equipment
- ensure that individual children's learning needs are met with sufficient challenge to extend their progress in all areas of learning, and in particular the level of staff support for numeracy based work, by reviewing the planning and assessment systems, including the use of regular observations, differentiation and a suitable balance of focussed work and continuous provision
- extend the opportunities for children's learning through the parent-partnership by providing suggestions for parents to support their children's learning at home; reporting and sharing progress on an ongoing basis with parents, and providing information about the planning and the content of the Foundation Stage.

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:

