



Free Spirits Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	319181
Inspection date	17 January 2006
Inspector	Cilla Burdis
Setting Address	Freeman Road, High Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE7 7DN
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Registered person	Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital Trust
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Free Spirits Nursery opened in 1999. It is owned and managed by Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital's National Health Service Trust to provide childcare primarily for staff working for the trust. Staff working in the local health economy can access childcare as the need arises. It operates from six rooms in a pre-fabricated building, which is situated within the Hospital complex, in the High Heaton area of Newcastle. A

maximum of 85 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.00 to 18.30 for 52 weeks of the year. All children have access to the enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 112 children, aged from 7 months to under 5 years, on roll; of these, 30 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area, as most of their parents travel to the nursery. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs, and also supports 13 children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 25 staff. All the staff, including the manager, hold early years qualifications. There are two members of staff working towards a higher level qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a varied range of activities that contribute to good health. They have opportunities to access soft play and to participate in a variety of outdoor activities. The children are enthusiastic and enjoy setting self-chosen challenges. Arrangements for children to rest or sleep are satisfactory. Sleeping children are closely monitored and checked regularly. The nursery routine, in some areas of the nursery, involves removing some of the children's clothing and leaving them playing in underwear until after their afternoon nap. It is also nursery practice to remove children's foot wear. This results in children playing either barefoot or in their socks. At times, children's feet were cold and some children walked on a wet bathroom floor after it had been cleaned.

Generally, a healthy lifestyle is promoted and children learn the importance of good hygiene practice as part of the daily routine. Children's independence, with regard to personal care, is enabled by having easy access to the bathroom, which has low level facilities and resources. The nursery's sickness policy is followed to ensure children are protected from illness and infection. All relevant documentation, including individual health needs, consent forms, medication and accident forms are in place and up to date. The majority of staff hold current first aid certificates. This safeguards children's well-being.

Children's individual dietary needs are established when the placement is being arranged. Practice varies within the nursery with regard to ensuring staff have clear guidance relating to children's specific dietary requirements. Children are encouraged to eat healthy meals and snacks. Fresh fruit is provided at snack-times and older children have easy access to drinking water. The quality of the meals varies. Some meals are freshly prepared and nutritious but some meals consist of processed foods.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The nursery is clean and generally well maintained. It is spacious and organised effectively to enable children to move freely and independently. Children have access to a varied range of equipment, which is monitored for safety and cleanliness. Although most areas are furnished satisfactorily, there is no appropriate seating for staff in some areas of the nursery. Annual risk assessments are undertaken and risks to children's safety identified. All staff working on the premises, however, are not taking responsibility for maintaining good levels of safety at all times. Although the manager has attached notices to the doors leading to the laundry and kitchen, which state that the doors must remain closed at all times, staff are not ensuring this. Also, because cleaning duties are undertaken during the hours the nursery operates, there are occasions when the floors in the bathrooms are wet. As a result, the risks to children's safety are not being minimised effectively at all times. Children's awareness with regard to promoting their own safety is developed by sensitive reminders from staff, discussions with the children and visitors to the setting. Clear procedures are in place should children be taken on outings. Effective security measures monitor access to the building and restrict access to all rooms where childcare is provided.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by staff who have a good level of knowledge with regard to child protection. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and know what to do if they have concerns. There is an ongoing programme of child protection training. Procedures are very detailed and comprehensive.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The children generally, are happy and settled. Most children relate well to staff and others. Most staff respond well to children's needs and provide appropriate levels of support and guidance. Overall, children participate in a varied range of age appropriate activities, however, children's learning is not always supported by staff through for example, effective questioning. Children can communicate their needs effectively for example, requesting aprons to undertake messy play or approaching staff for cuddles. Generally, the activities provided support children's development, however, systems do not ensure children's development is being monitored and promoted effectively in order to ensure that all children are making progress. The planning of activities does not ensure a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Staff working with children aged under 3 years, are following the Birth to three matters framework. Although it has not been fully implemented as yet, staff are providing children with opportunities to explore real life experiences and objects. The children in the Snowdrops room for example, explore a variety of tastes and textures of foods.

Children socialise with each other at meal-times. However, meal-times are not

always used to develop children's independence and skills by for example, helping them to serve themselves and others. Staff do not always sit with the children in order to develop their social skills and conversation.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Staff have limited knowledge and understanding of the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage of learning. Staff are not using the stepping stones to identify children's achievements and to plan the next steps in learning. Ineffective deployment of staff and the inconsistent staff group working in the pre-school room have prevented the development of effective team work. As a result, the more able children do not receive sufficient challenge and the less able are not being supported effectively to help them make progress in all six areas of learning.

Children are confident when discussing things that are important to them. They communicate well with staff to inform them of their needs. The children are interested in the activities provided but some of the older children lack focus. They do not select activities independently and they do not concentrate for periods of time. The staff are not engaging children's interest sufficiently and do not extend children's learning by asking questions and encouraging children to think or predict.

On occasions, children are grouped inappropriately. This impacts on the quality of experiences the children receive and overall, staff do not modify or extend activities in accordance with the needs of the individual child. The range of activities for children is limited. Children have limited opportunities to explore information technology. Opportunities to access the soft play are also limited. Although the room is very well resourced, the resources are not being used effectively to support children's all round development.

Most of the children do, however, enjoy their play. They engage in activities using one handed tools such as, scissors and pens and enjoy singing their favourite songs. The more able children are beginning to form more complex sentences. For much of the time, however, children are being occupied rather than having challenges set for them to encourage further learning and development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There are effective procedures in place to ensure staff receive good quality information relating to the individual care needs of each child. The nursery is proactive in ensuring appropriate action is taken when a child is identified as having special needs. All children are welcomed and there is a positive attitude towards inclusion.

Children's behaviour is satisfactory. Staff are generally effective in managing children's behaviour, however, behaviour can become boisterous because children are not involved in or stimulated by the limited range of activities set out for them. Positive behaviour management strategies are used by staff, which include providing

constructive praise. The staff generally, are good role models.

Children are helped to develop an understanding of the needs and feelings of others. They learn to share, take turns and are helped to understand how others may feel. The provider promotes a positive view of the diversity of society through activities. This approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities to raise children's awareness, on a daily basis, however, are not fully effective because of the limited resources available. Some of the children are taken on visits to the local park, which raises their awareness of their local community.

Partnerships with parents and carers are satisfactory. Parents of children receiving nursery education have the opportunity to attend regular parents' evenings where a progress report is completed. There is a notice board available that includes clear, in depth information regarding the education provision, however, this does not effectively reflect the practices in place. Children benefit from the settling-in procedure and the channels of communication that are established. The childcare agreement and the child's personal record ensure staff are well informed of each child's needs before they attend the nursery. Parents are informed of their child's care and activities on a daily basis. A diary system is used until the child reaches 18 months of age subsequently, the information is shared verbally.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery has developed a full range of policies and procedures, which inform staff and parents of how the setting operates on a daily basis; they do not, however, reflect current practice. There have been changes to the organisation and deployment of staff due to staff sickness and staff leaving the nursery, which impacts on the continuity of care of the children. All staff hold an early years qualification and have relevant experience. Ongoing training is encouraged, however, due to the recent staffing shortage this has been difficult to arrange. All relevant documentation is maintained.

The nursery is organised effectively to enable children to self-select resources and make choices. Children, however, do not always help themselves to the range of resources available. Activities are not planned effectively in all areas of the nursery to ensure a good balance of activities and experiences. When children start nursery, staff obtain good quality information relating to the care needs of the children. This information, however, is not updated to ensure all children's needs are monitored and met effectively. At times, nursery routines impact negatively on the comfort of the children. Children benefit from the information shared by visitors to the setting, such as keeping themselves safe near the roads.

It is a requirement of the registration that procedures must be followed when a manager is newly appointed. Since appointing a manager in August 2005, however, the provider has not ensured that these procedures were followed through and completed appropriately.

The trust has effective procedures in place to ensure all staff working in the nursery

undergo checks regarding their suitability before working with the children.

Leadership and management is inadequate. Although the managers have identified aspects for development and change, they have not addressed the inadequate teaching and learning for the pre-school children. There are no systems to ensure the adults working with these children are clear about their roles and understand their responsibilities in developing children's learning. Planning and evaluations of children's activities are not fully supported as staff have limited knowledge of children's developmental needs. This is therefore, having a negative impact on the progress children are making.

Overall, the needs of the children attending are not being met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed. Management ensure staff:child ratios are maintained by providing cover in the rooms themselves or by using supply or agency staff. The opening of the windows is controlled and arrangements ensure children cannot trap their fingers when the windows are open. Staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection is being developed by access to training. With regard to the nursery education, outdoor activities are incorporated into the planning of activities. A rota system is in place to ensure children have access to different types of equipment. At present, however, the plans are not being implemented effectively and as a result, the variety of experiences for the children are limited.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 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 children's comfort and dignity is not compromised when implementing nursery routines
- develop staff's understanding, with regard to maintaining safety in the nursery, at all times
- plan a balanced range of activities to ensure each child's development is promoted effectively
- ensure children's records are regularly updated to ensure their care and development needs are monitored and met effectively

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- increase staff's knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage to enable them to effectively plan, assess and evaluate the progress all children are making
- ensure activities and effective questioning provide challenge for more able children and support for less able children

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

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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: www.ofsted.gov.uk