



The Learning Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY289042
Inspection date	15 December 2005
Inspector	Marilyn Rosemary Peacock
Setting Address	St. Lukes Vicarage, Baxter Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 2HN
Telephone number	0208 708 3978
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Registered person	London Borough of Redbridge
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Learning Centre was registered in September 2004. This purpose built single storey Local Authority Day Nursery is situated in a busy residential street in Ilford close to parks and amenities and serves the local area. The nursery also has places for teachers working in the London Borough of Redbridge and parents who work for the Primary Care Trust.

The nursery opens between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday for 51

weeks of the year. The nursery is registered for 56 children between the ages of 0 and 5 years old, with no more than 17 children under the age of 2 years. The setting is able to support children with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

Seventeen members of staff are based at the nursery, this includes the manager and cook. Staff have appropriate early years qualifications to National Vocational Qualification Level 2 or 3. The setting receives advisory support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have many good opportunities to become physically active helping to develop their skills and fitness. All groups regularly use the outdoor areas for ball games and physical challenges. They use wheeled toys skilfully, pedalling, pushing and scooting, or avoiding obstacles. Pre-school children show good control and spatial awareness as they enthusiastically practice the cha cha slide for the winter festival. Babies have plenty of space to begin to crawl and pull themselves up.

Meal times are a social time where children and staff sit together demonstrating good social skills and learning table manners. Generally children are provided with healthy choices at meal times. However, children's understanding of good nutrition is compromised at breakfast when healthy options are not always available. Pre-school children's self help skills are not promoted fully at lunch time; they help wipe the tables and sort out the knives and forks but staff serve their food therefore limiting children's independence. Children's individual dietary needs are known to staff and fully met alternatives are always available to accommodate non meat eaters and children with special dietary needs.

Staff ensure that babies are offered plenty of fluids and toddlers are reminded to drink, if necessary. However, staff are not so vigilant in the pre-school room. A fresh water tap is in the room but staff do not routinely remind children to drink.

Children receive good care when they are unwell or have an accidental injury. The majority of staff have current first aid qualifications. Consents and procedures are reviewed regularly so that any changes in information about children's health are known to staff. Children are protected from infection, as staff ensure that the premises are clean and that sick children are appropriately excluded. Children learn good hygiene routines regarding hand washing; they need little reminding to wash their hands before their meals. Staff implement good health and hygiene procedures when nappy changing. They wear gloves and ensure the mat is sanitised after use. They chat to babies while they change them who respond with chuckles and giggles.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy the excellent facilities of their purpose-built environment, where the space is used effectively to provide them with a variety of play experiences. Toddlers and pre-school children are able to move from one room to the other, sharing activities and resources when the room doors are open, helping them develop a sense of belonging. Babies and toddlers are developing their social skills when they share toys and equipment during the day. However, staff do not fully utilise the cosy baby room. Babies are often fed their bottles at the tables with the more able babies, therefore opportunities are missed to provide babies with cuddles and one to one interaction.

Children choose from a very good range of toys and resources, which are appropriate for their developmental stages. Toys and equipment are in very good condition; they are easily accessible to children who can select toys and equipment that interest them, helping to promote children's independence and social skills.

Children are kept safe, at the nursery as the staff have a clear understanding of all safety issues. The room leaders carry out effective daily checks on the building, outdoor area and equipment. Children are safeguarded effectively in emergencies; they practice emergency evacuation procedures regularly. There are excellent procedures to protect children from being collected by unsuitable people. Staff are vigilant at recording visitors. The premises are completely secure, number key pads stop intruders from entering the building. Parents and visitors are only able to gain admission to the building by ringing the bell and waiting for the door to be opened. However, registration procedures are not so vigilant, children's attendance is not consistently recorded in their base rooms and there is no central register of children's attendance leaving children at risk in an emergency.

Children are well protected from abuse or neglect as staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues and procedures. The nursery's child protection officer keeps staff informed of changes to procedures at team meeting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and relaxed. They gain confidence through consistent routines and close relationships with the friendly and caring staff that are aware of their individual needs. They progress in their learning because staff plan a range of interesting activities both indoors and outside which cover all areas of their development.

Babies and very young children improve their achievements because staff have started to use the Birth to three matters framework to plan activities to meet their individual needs and stages of development. Babies and toddlers explore a variety of textures and materials such as paint, glue and glitter during creative activities. They use their senses as they play with sand and water. Their work is valued by staff that use children's achievements to make attractive displays which adorn the nursery walls helping children develop a sense of self worth and self esteem. Babies and

toddlers develop their early communication skills as staff respond to their gestures and sounds and encourage them to move to music and make marks with their fingers as they play with the sand.

Children aged from two to three years also have regular opportunities to develop their creative skills as they take part in craft activities to support winter festivals and times of celebration. They increase their vocabulary as they name the colour and animals featured in the book at story time. Children develop their confidence and self-esteem as staff help them develop independence when they visit the toilets to wash their hands before lunch with their friends. Children take part in singing and story time as a group and to talk about their interests and experiences from home at circle time.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children enjoy their time at the nursery and eagerly take part in activities. They are confident and motivated to learn. They have excellent opportunities to select and use resources for themselves and develop their own ideas. Children initiate their own learning, for example, by selecting their own materials and experimenting during art and craft activities. Children form good relationships with each other and the adults in the nursery. They work well together and are learning to share. They concentrate well at activities they have chosen for themselves.

Children speak very confidently and express their ideas clearly. They listen to each other and work co-operatively when painting and building. They are successfully developing their early reading skills as they link sounds to letters during activities. They listen attentively at story time anticipating the end of familiar books. However, children's choice of books is limited and there are few reference books available to support children's exploration during activities. Children recognise their own names and those of other children in their base room, using name cards. They attempt to write each other's names; staff skilfully introduce them to the sounds the letters in their names make. Staff do not always capitalize on opportunities for children to practise writing for different purposes, for example, they are not encouraged to record appointments in the role play hairdressers.

Children regularly count and use numbers during activities. They sing number songs, measure their heights and use language to describe size, shape and position as they build complicated models using construction kits. However, children do not sufficiently compare numbers during everyday routines and more able children are not sufficiently challenged to increase their developing mathematical skills by solving simple number problems.

Children learn more about the world as they visit the local shops and select books from the mobile library. They notice changes in the weather, they put their coats and hats on because it is cold outside. They develop an awareness of their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people, for example, by tasting different foods at times of celebration.

Children have good opportunity to express their creativity as they freely choose from a wide variety of materials, colours and textures. They communicate their ideas and

feelings as they paint observational pictures of each other. They take part in role-play in 'the hairdressers' and 'the travel agents'. Children move with confidence and coordination as they enthusiastically use their bodies to slide and dance. They clap and jump with excitement as they respond to music during practice for the winter festival. They successfully use a variety of tools and small equipment with increasing control, such as scissors, paint brushes and glue spreaders.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a sound knowledge of the foundation stage which they use to plan a range of interesting activities across all six areas of learning. The foundation stage co-ordinator works with the pre school staff reviewing focus activity planning and monitoring children's individual progress using staff observations of children's achievements as a guide. Staff that are new to the nursery and are developing their knowledge are supported by colleagues. Staff use clear explanations and effective questioning to challenge children's thinking and help them move on in their learning. A combination of adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff make regular observations and assessments of children's progress towards the early learning goals and use the information gained to plan each child's next steps.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children behave exceptionally well, they respond to the positive approach of staff, who praise them generously for good behaviour, such as helping to tidy away the equipment or helping younger children during activities. Staff use observations to identify possible reasons for children displaying inappropriate behaviour or behaviour which is out of character, which helps them to respond using strategies which support children's individual stage of development. Consequently the nursery is calm, relaxed and conducive to children's learning. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children show a growing awareness of the needs of others; they learn to share resources and care for each other. Children relate very well to each other and to the adults in the nursery, they enjoy each other's company, consequently the nursery is a happy place to be in.

Children's individual needs are met, as staff know them very well and plan activities which are consistent with their interests. Children learn about equality of opportunity through planned activities and they share each others festivals and times of celebration. This good practice is not followed through to the displays, posters or resources on offer which lack representation of gender, colour and ability.

There are good systems in place to support children who have special educational needs. Close liaison exists with parents and outside agencies to ensure children's needs are well planned for. Staff are secure in their understanding of the code of practice, which means they are able to plan for children's individual needs. Consequently, children with special needs are very well supported and fully included in the nursery day.

Partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good. Parents

contribute to an initial assessment of their child by sharing observations of their child's learning from home. This ensures staff have a good knowledge of individual needs and achievements and helps staff build on what children already know. Parents of pre-school children receive good information about the curriculum. Regular newsletters and detailed notice boards in each room provide current information about activities enabling parents to be involved in their child's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children enjoy a rich variety of play experiences, in a well-organised environment, where space and resources are used effectively. Staff work well as a team and staff ratios are good. Children's development is enhanced by the ongoing commitment of staff to furthering their knowledge of good practice through training. Consequently, children are happy and achieving well.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Children's care is underpinned by all the required documentation, although registers of attendance are not consistently maintained.

Leadership and management are good. The management team and the staff work together closely, to ensure that children receive appropriate care and education. There are effective systems to monitor the quality of provision, including staff appraisals and regular evaluations of activities and topics. Formal systems to evaluate the quality of teaching and to identify strengths and weakness in the delivery of the recently implemented foundation stage curriculum are planned. The nursery is committed to training, and staff are encouraged to update their skills and understanding. New systems for assessment and planning securely underpin the staff's ability to meet children's individual learning needs.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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):

- maintain an accurate record of children's attendance at all times
- provide opportunities for more able children to develop their self help skills by serving their own meals. Ensure pre school children are offered drinking water at regular intervals through out the day.
- provide children with healthy choices at breakfast
- provide opportunities for children to see positive images of gender, colour and ability throughout the nursery.

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):

- make good use of regular nursery routines and planned activities for children to compare number and practice simple number operations.
- ensure children have access to a broad range of books to support their learning across the curriculum, provide regular opportunities for children to practice writing for different purposes.

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