



The Learning Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY287285
Inspection date	09 January 2006
Inspector	Deborah Ann Benn

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Registered person	Early Years & Childcare
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Learning Centre is Neighbourhood Nursery and has been registered since 2004. It is run by the London borough of Redbridge and operates from a purpose built single storey building on the site of Hainault Forest High School in a semi-residential street in Hainault within the London borough of Redbridge close to parks and amenities. The nursery serves the local area and also has places for teachers working in the London borough of Redbridge and parents who work for Primary Care

Trust.

The nursery is open between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. There are currently 62 children aged from 5 months to 4 years attending, children attend for a variety of sessions, this includes 16 funded 3 year olds and 3 funded 4 year olds. The nursery supports a number of children with special needs.

There are 19 members of staff working directly with the children, including the manager of whom 16 have appropriate early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3 and 3 are working towards a level 2. The nursery receives support from an advisory teacher and the inclusive advisor who are both a part of the Local Authority Pedagogy team .

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm and clean environment, they benefit from the high level of cleanliness and hygiene throughout the nursery which effectively contributes to limiting the risk of cross infection. This is underpinned by effective health and hygiene procedures which staff implement well, such as the use of disposable gloves and aprons when changing nappies and the use of one use paper towels for hand drying. Good daily routines help children understand the importance of personal hygiene. Children know they must wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating snacks to prevent the spread of germs. The accessibility of resources support these attitudes and children help themselves to tissues and dispose of them appropriately.

Staff have relevant first aid training and implement procedures such as the recording of accidents and administration of medication appropriately to maintain good health and consistency of care.

Children are provided with a varied range of meals throughout the week. However, although the main meal is well balanced and promotes healthy eating, breakfast and tea times offer little choice and frequently have a high sugar content. Meal times are sociable and give opportunity for children to enjoy their food, however opportunities to promote independence or make choices are missed as staff serve the food with very little input from children. Babies benefit from their individual feed routines being followed. Older children have access to a water cooler at any time.

Opportunities for children to be active, learn to control their bodies and develop their physical skills both indoors and outdoors are good. Children competently use a wide range of small tools and equipment with increasing control including, scissors, dough cutters and glue pens. They take part in vigorous exercise on a daily basis as they access the outdoor play area to run, pedal and play ball games. Good quality indoor resources such as the platform for the pre-school children and the low ramp and

steps for the babies, are used confidently by the children to support their physical development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a bright and well maintained environment. All furniture and fittings are of a high quality and used effectively to create smaller homely spaces within the rooms. The premises provide excellent facilities, there is ample space for children to play, rest and eat in comfort and they move around the areas with confidence. The safety surfaced outdoor play area helps to limit injuries when children are running and playing energetically in the garden. The thoughtful use of half-doors to the nappy changing and milk preparation areas means that babies are able to see to staff at all times and are continuously within adults' sight and sound whilst still ensuring their safety.

The use of low storage units means that children are able to safely access additional toys and equipment and have the opportunity to make choices. Toys are age appropriate, there is a sturdy and good sized home life area in each room with furniture that is of a different height dependent on the age range of the children accessing it.

Children's safety is promoted because staff are vigilant at reducing risks and minimising hazards. Staff check the areas and resources used by children daily and are aware of their ongoing responsibility to ensure children are kept safe. Children are cared for in a safe and very secure environment where all visitors are monitored and access to children's play rooms is limited by the use of controlled access systems with only permanent staff able to access all areas unaccompanied. Good regard is given to fire safety, a fire drill has been devised and is regularly practised. Fire fighting equipment is appropriately wall mounted and regularly tested.

Practitioners show a good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues which helps them protect children from harm and neglect. The whole staff team are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection, good use is made of local training opportunities to ensure that knowledge is kept current and that staff are clear about appropriate procedures to follow if they have concerns regarding a child's welfare. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and contact numbers readily accessible.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and content. They work co-operatively together in a relaxed and friendly manner, there is an obvious warmth between the adults and children and they enjoy each other's company. Children are happy and settled. Good processes are in place to ensure that children are well supported when they start at the nursery and also when they move on from one room to another. Children's individual care

needs are appropriately met. An effective key worker system provides children with consistent care, particularly regarding the intimate care required for babies. Staff are beginning to implement Birth to three matters framework which is impacting positively on the care of babies and very young children. The use of sensory play is being developed throughout the nursery and children enjoy exploring different textures such as sand, foam and water; the addition of different smells and textures to play dough and the use of music also help to stimulate senses.

Staff interpret babies sounds and gesticulations naturally, helping them to make sense of their world and encouraging their language and sense of belonging.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The level of challenge is sufficient to interest most children and enable them to make satisfactory progress. However, teaching is not particularly innovative and there are weaknesses in some areas of learning where opportunities to extend children's thinking are missed and learning intentions not always clear. Children are keen and motivated to take part in activities and respond readily to staff, they build relationships with adults and each other but older and more able children are insufficiently challenged. Children have good opportunities to develop personal independence through selecting toys and resources of their choice but their choices are not well monitored or built upon by staff and therefore they do not grapple with new ideas or concepts.

Key workers have a clear understanding of how individual children are progressing. However, although individual assessments are used and detailed observations made, information gathered is not fully utilised for forward planning linking to the stepping stones. Planning is very general and does not include information as to how activities can be extended or adapted.

Children handle books with confidence, they concentrate well, listening to stories and anticipating what is going to happen next. However, children's understanding of the wider purposes of writing and the printed word is limited by the lack of use of signs and lists such as recipes or menus and organisation of resources such as the lack of note books and pens in the role play areas and the uninspiring mark making area.

Children are learning to count and understand numbers, they confidently count when looking at books or joining in with number rhymes and songs and use their knowledge naturally such as counting the number of carriages on the train they have put together. Children are beginning to use comparative language such as stating which train is longer and which is shorter.

Children become more aware of their local community and environment as they take part in regular outings to the shops to collect photographs they have taken or take part in nature walks in the park collecting leaves and looking for bugs. They are beginning to learn about how things work such as understanding that the camera needed new batteries when they noticed that the flash did not go off.

Children enjoy expressing themselves using paint, showing wonder as they mix colours and having freedom to create their own designs. They use their imaginations

as they create scenarios giving themselves roles and using resources and dressing up clothes to formulate characters.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is appropriately fostered. Resources and play equipment reflect diversity and children are beginning to learn about each other's cultures as they take part in activities such as making cards to acknowledge one another's faith festivals. Children's individuality is respected and valued, babies' home routines are followed so that they are able to sleep and eat when they need to rather than as dictated by nursery routines. Siblings who are not in the same age group room are able to have contact with each other throughout the day, providing reassurance and continuity.

Although there are appropriate policies and systems in place to support children with special educational needs these are not fully utilised in practice. The nursery works closely with other agencies to provide a holistic care approach. However, the development of individual educational plans to support children's progress has been delayed and general plans do not include guidance for staff as to how to adapt activities to ensure full participation and inclusion. Staff are beginning to use Makaton signing to support speech and language and a written daily diary is in use between nursery and home to ensure that parents are kept informed about detail which may be lost due to lack of verbal communication.

Children's behaviour is very good, they respond readily to staff's gentle reminders to be kind to each other and follow their example of speaking with respect. Staff readily acknowledge appropriate and thoughtful behaviour giving specific praise in order that children understand what they have done well.

Children benefit from the friendly informal relationships between practitioners and parents. Parents feel comfortable in the setting and are confident to speak with key workers about their child's day. They are made welcome and actively involved in settling their child, assured that they are able to stay as long as the child needs the reassurance of their presence. This is further underpinned by a meeting held within a few weeks to discuss and review the situation. Daily discussions help to make sure that parents are kept informed of routines such as how long children have slept, what they have eaten as well as their general disposition.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in the nursery, they receive good quality information about the setting in the welcome pack and regular updates in newsletters; there is an active parents forum and relevant information is displayed in the entrance area.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Although parents receive general information about the Foundation Stage curriculum they receive limited guidance as to how they could be actively involved in their child's learning. Individual meetings are held between key workers and parents twice yearly but these are not consistently used to inform parents of the

child's progress toward the early learning goals and to explain how together they will be supporting children to work towards the next stepping stone in each area of learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's individual care needs are appropriately supported because the practitioners work closely with parents to ensure they have good knowledge of their home and family circumstances. Staff deployment is good and ensures that children are well supervised at all times. There is a commitment to ongoing staff support and development and all staff are actively encouraged to further their knowledge and improve their understanding through the use of both internal and external training.

Records are clear, current and stored with an awareness of confidentiality. All required documentation is in place, personal details and information about each child is kept in separate folders and stored in a locked cupboard. A record of complaints and concerns made by parents has been kept and is currently being revised in line with recent legislation. Good systems are in place to ensure the suitability of staff.

Leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. Staff receive regular one to one supervision and annual appraisals. However, although the manager has started to audit the strengths and weaknesses of the setting, systems to monitor the standard of teaching are not yet fully effective.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been complaints made to Ofsted since 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.

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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):

- improve daily menus to provide children with healthy choices and a better variety of food at breakfast and tea times
- improve practice and planning to actively support the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs (also applies to nursery education)

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):

- improve planning and the use of resources to provide more challenge and ensure that learning intentions are clear across the curriculum
- develop systems to monitor and improve the standard of teaching
- make improvements as indicated in the care section above

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