



University of Exeter Family Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	105920
Inspection date	06 March 2006
Inspector	Anne Legge
Setting Address	University of Exeter, Mardon Hill, Streatham Drive, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4QW
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Registered person	Guild of Students, Exeter University
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Exeter University Family Centre was established in 1973 by the Guild of Students at Exeter University. It is registered to provide full day care for 53 children under 8 years of age. The Family Centre is managed by the Guild of Students via a Joint Management Committee, which employs 16 child-care staff, a cook, secretary and technician. All of the child care staff have appropriate child care qualifications, and 14 are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3. The qualified

manager is supernumerary.

The Family Centre operates in a purpose-built building situated in a one acre site on the University of Exeter campus. There are 4 separate rooms for the children, each with toilet facilities and access to a covered outdoor area. There are additional separate enclosed outdoor play areas for different age groups within the site. There is a staff room, office, kitchen and laundry within the building. The Family Centre is open as a nursery for 42 weeks per year on weekdays, from 08:15 until 17:30. A play scheme also operates for 4 weeks during the summer holidays. There are currently 59 children on roll, including 23 funded 3 and 4-year-olds. The Family Centre welcomes and supports children who have special needs and children who have English as an additional language. The Family Centre receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy excellent opportunities to be physically active. They have very regular access to the covered outdoor area, which adjoins each room, and to separate grassed areas for each age group. They run freely, climb and balance on large equipment, crawl through tunnels or dig in the sand. They push, pedal or scoot wheeled toys, or paint walls with water. Younger children dance or play active singing games indoors, and older children make weekly visits to the university sports hall, for dance, drama or energetic team games. All children enjoy plenty of fresh air, as doors are left open, and babies sleep in prams outdoors, except in exceptionally bad weather.

Children benefit from extremely healthy meals and snacks, which are carefully prepared on the premises. They enjoy fruit for snacks, and balanced, home-cooked meals, including plenty of vegetables and other nutritious ingredients, such as pasta or brown bread. They have plenty of fluids, as water is always available for all children, and drinks are offered regularly. Children's special dietary needs and preferences are known and very well met, as lists are attached to food trolleys, to remind all staff.

Children receive excellent care when they are unwell or injured. All staff have current first aid qualifications and all accidents and details of medication administered are carefully documented, and shared with parents. Medical consents are in place. Children are exceptionally well protected from infection, due to the excellent hygiene routines, which are in place, throughout the Family Centre. Staff ensure that nappy changing is completely hygienic, as they follow strict routines regarding disinfection after each change, and at the end of the day. All surfaces are kept clean, especially tables used for food, and good systems ensure that toys are always clean. An effective sickness exclusion policy prevents the spread of infection. Children learn very good hygiene routines, as they are taught to flush toilets, wash their hands appropriately, and clean their teeth properly after meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy the facilities of a purpose-built Family Centre, which is exceptionally safe and secure. All play rooms are made attractive for children, with low-level displays, cushions and mirrors. Space is used thoughtfully and creatively, to provide a very good variety of play experiences for children. Each room offers carpeted and messy areas, as well as immediate access to the very well used outdoor play areas. Children choose from a very wide variety of toys and resources, which are all clean, safe and in good condition.

Children are very safe in the Family Centre, due to the staff's exemplary understanding of all safety issues, and the clear written procedures which they follow. Excellent systems are in place, to ensure that unauthorised people cannot enter the nursery and that children cannot leave without adult supervision. These include a security-coded door lock and a succession of gates, with locks on both sides. There are comprehensive risk assessment procedures, to ensure that children are safe in the building. The manager conducts a complete daily check of the premises and small equipment, and large play equipment is checked regularly. Children are safe on outings, as full risk assessments are carried out, staff ratios are high, and buggies and restraints are used, as appropriate. Children are very safe in emergencies, as they practise evacuation procedures weekly, and all know what to do when the alarm sounds. They learn to manage their own safety; for example, staff explain procedures for using the climbing equipment, or as they discuss safety with visitors, such as, police officers or ambulance crews. Children are safe from abuse or neglect, due to the staff's excellent understanding of all child protection issues and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a very good variety of interesting and appropriate activities, in all age-groups. They are settled and happy at the Family Centre, and they soon become confident and eager to learn. Throughout the setting, staff plan activities which children enjoy and which effectively promote their development in all areas. Excellent observation and assessment systems ensure that children's individual learning needs are met. Their progress is very well promoted, due to the staff's comprehensive understanding of their development and effective use of questions, discussion, chatting and singing.

Staff use the Birth to three matters framework, to ensure that young children are supported in all aspects of their development, especially in developing their communication skills. Younger children play with a wide range of resources, and sometimes enjoy using familiar and household items in their heuristic play sessions. However, they do not have constant access to a variety of natural resources or different textures. Their sense of self and of belonging to different groups is not always developed, such as by displaying family photographs at their level.

Children aged under 3-years are cared for in three groups. Babies' individual needs

are met, as staff work closely with parents, to follow home routines, and provide a relaxed and loving environment. Activities are planned, and adapted as necessary, to meet the needs and moods of those attending. Toys are rotated over three-weekly periods, to ensure that all children have variety, even if they attend part-time. In the Parallel Unit, children become independent, as they make choices and begin to help with routines; such as, tidying up. They enjoy many sensory, messy and creative activities; such as, painting, playing with oats, or using glue and glitter. They make good progress, as staff chat, sing and count with them, as they play. Children in the Toddler Unit concentrate very well, as they share stories, thread bricks on strings, or discuss the days of the week. They become creative and imaginative, as staff plan a wide range of activities for them and encourage their development, through skilful interactions.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an excellent understanding of the foundation stage curriculum. They consistently promote children's development, by the skilful use of questions and discussion, which challenge children's thinking and encourage them to move to the next stage of learning. Staff observe children's achievements and set clear targets for them, which are then used very effectively, to plan appropriate activities. Planning systems ensure that children have access to the whole curriculum over time, and that their individual learning needs are met.

Children make excellent progress, across the curriculum. They are enthusiastic and independent learners, able to organise their own play and to concentrate very well at chosen or adult-led activities. They develop a love of books, as they share stories in large or small groups. They make outstanding progress in their understanding of letter sounds, as they discuss letters in daily routines; such as, when doing puzzles, and practise them in structured sessions. They write for a variety of purposes; such as, when making cards, and begin to write their own name. Children count throughout sessions, making excellent use of daily routines; such as, snack and meal times. Able children are consistently challenged to compare groups and work out one more or less than a number. They recognise numerals, as they use them constantly in their play; such as, on place mats or signs showing how many children may use the role-play area.

Children create freely, using an excellent variety of resources; such as, paint, glue, paper or recycled materials. They are extremely imaginative in their role-play, which is skilfully supported by staff, and they enjoy singing familiar songs or exploring rhythms with rhythm sticks. They learn about the natural world, in topics such as 'Birds', when they discuss which birds fly, and experiment with making waterproof wings. They grow fruit, flowers and vegetables in the outdoor area, and develop a good sense of time, as they discuss routines and seasons. They use a computer, telephones and a toy oven, with great confidence, effectively developing their understanding of technology. Children develop excellent co-ordination in their use of small equipment; such as, brushes, scissors and rollers. They use large equipment; such as, wheeled toys and climbing frames, with very good control.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The Family Centre's partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents feel fully involved in all aspects of their child's care and education, so they are able to effectively support progress at all stages. They receive excellent information about policies and procedures, and about the foundation stage curriculum and Birth to three matters framework. Children's records are comprehensive, and allow parents to see clearly how their child is making progress. These records are shared regularly and parents receive termly reports, which summarise progress in all areas of development and learning. Parents are invited to add their comments to records, and they share children's targets, so that they can be fully involved in their child's progress. Staff work very closely with parents, to meet children's needs, exchanging verbal or written information daily, and adapting provision to suit individuals.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff create a calm, positive environment, where children's differences are valued and their individuality expressed. All families are welcomed and included, and parents from different countries are invited to share aspects of their heritage; such as, by cooking with the children or becoming involved in festivals. Children behave very well, as they respond to the excellent role-modelling of staff, and the Family Centre's clear routines and high expectations of behaviour. They praise each other, share resources and take turns; such as, on the computer. They learn about right and wrong, as they discuss why some behaviour is inappropriate, and as staff use copious praise when behaviour is good. Children who may have special needs are carefully monitored, and there are excellent systems in place, to support those with identified special needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are care for in a well organised and comfortable environment, where space and resources are used very effectively, to provide an excellent variety of activities. Staff are extremely well qualified and committed to achieving the highest standards of care and education for all children. Leadership and management are outstanding. The manager is closely involved in all aspects of the Family Centre's work, and she very effectively monitors the quality of nursery education provided. Staff appraisals and regular meetings with room leaders ensure that all issues are addressed and that children's needs are known and met. The Family Centre is part of a Quality Assurance scheme, and all members of the staff team are committed to constantly improving practice, for the benefit of the children. The Family Centre meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Children's care is underpinned by all the required documentation, including very detailed policies and procedures, which staff know and implement. Children's progress records are exemplary. Documentation is currently being updated, and some remains to be completed. Registration systems lack sufficient detail, the complaints procedure does not yet reflect recent changes in regulations, and

medication records do not always ensure children's confidentiality.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, staff have improved children's safety, by updating child protection policies and procedures. They have improved the quality of nursery education, by increasing children's opportunities to create freely, using a wide range of materials.

Complaints since the last inspection

In December 2004, concerns were raised about a baby sleeping outdoors in a pram. This relates to National Standard 6: Safety, and Annex A, Babies/Children under 2. The provider conducted an internal investigation and adapted records relating to the monitoring of sleeping babies. No further action was taken and the registered person 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.

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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):

- continue to develop the already good practice with the younger children, giving them increased access to natural materials and further opportunities to develop their sense of belonging, such as by using photographs of family members in play
- continue to update policies and procedures, ensuring that they are all sufficiently detailed and shared appropriately with parents, especially records of medication administered, attendance registers and the complaints procedure.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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