



Kidsunlimited Nurseries - St. Mary's

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	500194
Inspection date	13 February 2006
Inspector	Maria Keane
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Registered person	Kidsunlimited Nurseries
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?

St. Mary's Courtyard Nursery opened in March 2000. It is situated in inner-city Manchester in a converted church school which is a listed building. The nursery is on two floors with a lift for people with disabilities. There are two baby rooms, two toddler rooms and a pre-school room. In addition, there is a secure outdoor play area. There are separate facilities for staff and office areas for administration. Meals are prepared each day on the premises.

There are currently 82 children on roll, of these 18 are in receipt of nursery education funding. The nursery currently supports a small number of children who have identified special needs. There are no children currently attending who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday from 07.00 to 18.00 all year round, excluding bank holidays.

There are 26 full and part-time staff working with the children. There are 17 staff who have early years qualifications. There are 9 staff members who are currently on training programmes. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very clean and hygienic environment. They benefit from the staff's ability to consistently follow health and hygiene guidelines, such as wearing protective clothing when changing nappies and serving food. Procedures for the care of babies are particularly good as staff and visitors are requested to remove shoes before entering areas where there are crawling babies. The children learn about good hygiene practices through daily routines, such as hand washing and discussions about how germs are spread. Children are further protected as procedures for the safe administration of medication, clear recording of accidents and exclusion policies are kept up to date and followed by staff.

Mealtimes are social occasions which children enjoy. They sit together in small groups and older children have some good opportunities to develop independence, for example, setting the table and serving themselves. Babies also have some good opportunities to practice the enjoyable skill of feeding themselves. Children enjoy a healthy, well balanced diet. They learn about 'good and bad' foods and experience different tastes and textures. Drinks are accessible throughout the day in children's individually labelled cups.

Children enjoy exercise and fresh air as outdoor play is a regular feature in children's daily routine. They use the open space to stay healthy by running around, playing chasing games and using outdoor equipment. Older children are beginning to develop good hand and eye co-ordination skills when using bats and balls. However, there are no challenging opportunities for children to practice climbing skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a bright, welcoming and very secure environment. Staff take pride in maintaining a child friendly environment by displaying children's art work and photographs of children at play. Parents and children are greeted by the person in charge on entrance to the nursery and children are organised into playrooms

according to their age and ability. The playrooms that accommodate the babies are bright and aesthetically pleasing. There are a wide range of sensory displays and accessible man-made resources. The rooms that accommodate the toddlers are very spacious and organised for children to move around freely. However, some of the play areas in these rooms are not very inviting and lack opportunities for children to play with a purpose. For example, the home and book area have limited resources and damaged books, which results in children not using these areas effectively. Children who are based in the pre-school room benefit from having access to low level storage units which helps create a child-centred learning environment. In addition, there are two other play rooms for children to develop their imaginative and creative play. However, all these rooms are not used to their full potential and prevent children from freely accessing continuous provision which allows them to play and learn at a pace appropriate to their individual needs.

Risk of accidental injury to children is minimised as staff prioritise children's safety and follow clear procedures, such as the safe evacuation in the event of a fire. There are very good security precautions in place, such as intercom systems and clear records of visitors to the nursery. The children learn about safe practices in their daily routines, such as holding on to hand rails when using the stairs and using slow feet when walking indoors.

Children's welfare is adequately safeguarded as the managers have a good knowledge of the child protection procedures and one manager is present at all times. The staff also work within the nursery procedures and share concerns with the child protection co-ordinator. Some staff have attended external child protection training. However, all staff are not as confident with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures or the common signs of child abuse.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally happy and settle well in the care of a supportive staff team. The youngest children benefit from effective key person systems, which enables them to receive consistent and familiar care. They develop a good sense of belonging through well established routines and individual care, for example, drawers to keep their individual belongings and photographs of children at play displayed around the nursery. Children develop good relationships with staff, they receive lots of cuddles and verbal support from them. The youngest children have some very good opportunities to explore natural materials and their environment using their senses, for example, touching sensory displays and the treasure basket contents. Tactile activities, such as using their senses to explore paint are regularly planned for children. They enjoy stories and join in enthusiastically at singing sessions. The staff plan children's activities using the Birth to three matters framework to guide their practice. This means they benefit from interesting play opportunities that enable them to learn whilst having fun. Regular yoga and baby signing sessions further contribute to children's enjoyment and wellbeing. The children have some opportunities to freely access resources and activities.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals because they access a suitable range of activities linked to the six areas of learning. The staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage is weak mainly because there have been some significant staff changes recently and new staff have not yet received the appropriate training. However, the staff do use detailed planning and assessment systems which provide them with adequate knowledge of the six areas of learning and children's individual learning requirements. Children access some good activities and resources, however, staff do not always make good use of the opportunities to teach and question children, consequently their thinking and learning are not fully challenged. The children join in activities well and demonstrate good concentration skills during play. However, this is sometimes difficult for children to sustain, as they are not grouped appropriately to maximise learning opportunities or for staff to set appropriate challenges for individuals. Children enjoy the freedom of using different rooms to develop their play and enjoy activities. The staff have recently identified the importance of providing continuous provision in each area of learning for children to freely access. However, children are not yet using these areas fully as they are still being developed.

Children settle well and are happy. They are confident and eager to share experiences with staff and other children. Children are generally well behaved, although, at whole group activities they can act boisterously because their interest is not sustained. They have some good opportunities to develop personal independence as they practice putting on their coats and serve themselves at lunchtime. Children have some good opportunities to learn about the community through project related activities, such as visits to the theatre. They enjoy sharing books and use language well to recite stories to their friends. Some children are able to write their name using formed letters and others are confident emergent writers. There are however, too few opportunities for children to write with a purpose or to understand that print carries meaning. Children particularly enjoy singing and join in enthusiastically.

Children confidently use numbers through daily routines, such as counting the number of children when lining up for outdoor play. They particularly enjoy using simple number rhymes to count forwards and backwards. They have few opportunities to identify with shape and patterns when playing with jigsaws and construction. Children are beginning to develop mathematical skills during practical activities, such as weighing ingredients during cookery sessions. However, there are missed opportunities for children to learn about volume, quantity and capacity through practical activities.

They develop a keen interest in the world around them as they discuss changing seasons and watch seeds grow into plants. All children are developing a good awareness of passing time as they regularly share their news and discuss the things they have been doing at home with their families. Children are interested in learning about the wider world through the celebration of festivals and taking part in the French club. However, there are very few opportunities for children to learn about

why and how things happen through accessible resources and activities.

Children are very creative and are proud to show off their displayed artwork. They have some opportunities to freely explore colour and texture. Children particularly enjoy role-play and use a sufficient amount of resources to extend and lead their play using their imaginations.

Overall children are making steady progress in an environment which is going through some staff changes which impacts on the consistency of teaching and the education provision.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are warmly welcomed into the setting. Their individual needs and requirements are sufficiently met through effective key person systems and clear records of each child. Children and their families are valued and treated with respect. Diversity is reflected around the nursery in the form of posters, photographs and resources. In addition, children learn about the local community and wider world through project related activities. Children with special needs are well supported as staff work closely with them, their parents and other agencies to develop a consistent approach. Currently there are some staffing difficulties, which impacts on the effectiveness of the programmes of work set for individual children.

The children are generally well behaved especially when their interest is sustained. They are able to share, take turns and respond well to the positive praise and encouragement. Children's contributions are valued as staff talk to them with respect and their representational artwork is displayed for all to see. This approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory.

The staff work effectively with parents to ensure children's individual and cultural needs are met. The parents are kept well informed about children's progress and development in the form of day sheets and assessments. They are invited to contribute to children's learning and attend parents evenings.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery environment is well organised to promote children's play and learning. In the main the staff work well together and use planning meetings, appraisals and staff meetings to communicate ideas and concerns. The staff are committed to developing their knowledge of child development and how children learn and are given opportunities to undertake further training to support their interests. There are effective induction programmes and clear policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children. All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and wellbeing are also in place and stored appropriately.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory.

The pre-school staff and nursery management take responsibility for the Foundation Stage curriculum and have sufficient knowledge of the six areas of learning. They are supported by a regional care and curriculum manager who offers support through training and facilitating meetings. As identified, there are gaps in the education provision due to staffing issues and consistency in the delivery of an appropriate education provision. The lack of rigid monitoring and evaluation systems means that weak teaching methods and group organisation are left unnoticed which impacts on children's continuous learning. The managers are however, very committed to developing the education provision with the support of the local authority and to further training opportunities for new staff.

Overall the needs of all the children that attend are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care and nursery inspections recommended that the nursery ensure that there are sufficient toys in all rooms, provide opportunities outdoors on a regular basis for the babies, organise children and staff in ways that facilitate effective small groups that children can enjoy, review and improve provision for the use of books in a comfortable area and integrate simple mathematical problem solving into routine activities.

There has been sufficient improvement since the previous inspections. The babies are now offered a very good range of stimulating sensory resources and activities. In addition, they have regular opportunities to use the outdoor play area, mainly on warmer, dry days. Older children are offered a sufficient range of toys and resources. There has been some progress with the organisation of effective small groups. Children now have use of three play rooms which they use in small groups for their enjoyment. However, further improvement is recommended to ensure that small groups are used to maximise children's learning opportunities and to review the role of the adult within these groups. There are now two comfortable book areas that provide a range of books that relate to children's experiences. Children have some opportunities to solve mathematical problems through routine activities which include singing number songs and discussing number lines. These improvements have resulted in adequate benefits to children's welfare and learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted has received three complaints since the last inspection in June 2003.

The first related to National standard 2 - organisation, National standard 4 - physical environment, National standard 11 - behaviour and National standard 12 - partnership with parents. A childcare inspector from Ofsted made an unannounced visit on 23 November 2004 to investigate these concerns. The evidence examined demonstrated that the National standards continue to be met and the provider remains qualified for registration.

The second complaint related to staffing issues, National standard 2 - organisation. The provider was asked to investigate and report back to Ofsted. The provider reported back that they acknowledged that there had been a period of high staff turnover. The provider was satisfied that during this period, staff had attempted to ensure that children were cared for in a consistent manner and the situation had now improved, therefore the provider remains qualified for registration.

The third complaint relates to staffing ratios, National standard 2 - organisation. A childcare inspector made an unannounced visit on 02 February 2005 to investigate these concerns. The evidence examined demonstrated that National standard 2 was not being met and therefore one action was raised.

The providers written reply demonstrated that appropriate action has been taken to ensure effective deployment of staff within the premises and therefore 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

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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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review the organisation of rooms, resources and play areas for toddlers and older children to ensure their interest and enjoyment is sustained and learning areas and additional rooms are used effectively (also applies to nursery education)
- ensure that staff update their knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures

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 the organisation of whole group times to maximise on learning opportunities and ensure the children are fully supported and appropriately challenged
- develop all the staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage and continuous play provision to enable them to understand how children learn and review current teaching methods to ensure that children's thinking and learning is sufficiently challenged in all six areas of learning
- introduce more rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the impact of the education provision so that the areas of improvement are quickly addressed
- make improvements as indicated in the care section above.

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