



Brookvale Neighbourhood Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Registered person	Pre-School Learning Alliance
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Crèche

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

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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?

Brookvale Neighbourhood Nursery and Crèche opened in 2004. They are managed by the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA). They operate from the crèche rooms and three main nursery areas in Brookvale Children's Centre in Runcorn, Cheshire. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. The crèche is open from 09.30 to 11.30 and 12.30 to 14.30 for 51 weeks of the year to support families attending the Surestart Centre. Children share access to fully

enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 84 children aged from 0 to five years on roll in the nursery. Of these, 28 children receive funding for nursery education. The crèche provides care for no more than 26 children at any one time. The setting supports a number of children with special needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 19 members of staff, of whom 13 hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The crèche employs three members of staff who all hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to understand the importance of following basic routines as they gradually become responsible for their own health and hygiene. Each child learns to brush their own teeth, use their own face cloth and manage their own personal care, with praise and encouragement from staff. Children's health is well protected because appropriate procedures are in place to reduce risks, such as recording accidents or administering first aid. There are good procedures in place to reduce the risk of cross contamination and infections, for example by use of colour coded cloths and mops to keep separate the cleaning of toilet, activity or kitchen areas. Suitable nappy changing routines are followed by all staff. Children with additional health needs are supported by staff's current knowledge of first aid and relevant training.

Children enjoy very regular and varied physical activity outside and indoors throughout the year. They develop confidence as they learn to use their bodies in different ways and move with increasing control. Young babies enjoy crawling through a tunnel and older children experiment with scooters, cones and hoops, or explore opportunities together in the sensory play room. They also enjoy 'movers and shakers' sessions on a regular basis where they can make bridges, play circle games, jump, bounce, and wave ribbons on sticks. Children take part in nature walks around the grounds of the children's centre or grow and experience plants, sand, wind-chimes and herbs in the sensory courtyard garden. Fine motor skills are also developed as children manipulate different materials and consistencies such as play dough or fabrics.

Staff make time for pre-school children to become as independent as possible in taking care of their own hygiene, using the automatic soap, paper towels and bins which are all provided within the purpose-built toilet areas. Staff talk to children about why hygienic procedures are adopted. They also skilfully use visual prompts, such as laminated photos of children in the nursery washing hands at the basins, to remind children to do the same. Children aged three and four also know where to find

tissues to blow their noses and they put their used tissues in the bin. They also know that they need sun cream and sun hats for playing outside in the summer sun which can burn them.

Healthy and nutritious options are available for snacks and meals, with a selection of fresh fruit and vegetables and other healthy items identified on pre-planned menus. Children are offered sufficient variety to encourage a good understanding of healthy eating for young children. For example, pre-school children were involved in making and eating an African fruit punch recently as part of their Africa week. Individual dietary needs are also clearly identified and followed and parents are informed of their child's diet in a daily record. Water coolers are accessible to older children to enable them to help themselves to fresh drinking water at any time. Younger children are offered drinks of water on a regular basis to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, bright, welcoming, secure and safe environment. The nursery is open plan, but well organised into three discreet age-related activity areas, where children can be observed at all times by their key staff. These areas are comfortable, with adjoining toilets or nappy changing areas, so that children move around the setting with confidence and do not need to leave their area. Small babies can now be separated from toddlers so that they are safer.

The welcoming accommodation is being quite well used by most staff to promote children's emotional well-being. Areas are homely, well labelled and very stimulating. For example, the babies' room now has mobiles, coloured drapes and interesting activity centres attached low to the walls so that babies can press, spin, push and initiate sounds and movement. Equally, entrance areas are inviting and informative, with a wealth of information about the staff and activities of the nursery. Children are safely contained in the nursery environment where locks and intercom systems protect children from unknown visitors. When they are utilising other rooms such as the hall or sensory room within the Children's Centre, they move as a secure group, holding coloured rings between each other to stay as one line.

Areas are well set out for the continuous provision of varied resources and media, so that children can freely choose activities which staff can build upon and extend. For example, the pre-school has clearly identified areas for role play (presently an aircraft), construction, water, and reading. Children challenge themselves to build a house in the construction area which is large enough to get inside. They work together and with staff to select wooden blocks and shapes of all sizes to make it.

Children are generally safe within the nursery because staff assess and minimise risks to protect children. For example, they conduct safety checks on the outside area before it is used each day. Children move freely around their home areas and can enjoy cosy soft seating areas to relax and listen to stories. Staff are usually vigilant to ensure that children move about safely within the setting and with increasing responsibility for themselves. For example, children do not run indoors, they move chairs safely and put them back under tables when they get up to move on. Children

also learn about keeping themselves safe when they practise emergency escape procedures. However, adults do not consistently promote and anticipate movements quickly enough to prevent occasional unsafe situations from arising. For example, two and three-year-olds become restless waiting for lunch and some are excitable and noisy during parachute group games sessions. Some pre-school children play unnoticed with the water in the toilet sinks, while others are causing a hazard on their scooters outside while other children are trying to use the hoops, train set, or table top craft activity.

The crèche provides a safe haven for children as their safety is given a high priority and risks are regularly assessed and minimised through staff vigilance. Children enjoy freely exploring a wide range of well organised resources and activities with appropriate support from staff.

Children use innovative and stimulating resources which are clean and purchased from reputable sources. These resources contribute significantly to children's enjoyment and achievement, are well set out for children to access freely, and facilitate the continuous learning environment. Resources are mostly kept in storage boxes which are labelled with words and pictures to aid children's letter and word recognition. This means that children can easily find resources or can help with most aspects of tidying away. For example, one child goes to a drawer by the water tray and gets out the ducks to add to his water game. There are particularly interesting craft and sensory materials used, as well as many natural items such as wood and wicker, to enable children to experience different textures and consistencies. The Centre's excellent sensory room is an asset, with bubble tubes, a softly vibrating giant cushion, a light screen for using a light pen on to make pictures, fibre optic ropes, florescent stars, and treasure boxes of materials.

Children are protected from abuse because staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. They are aware of what to do in the event of an allegation being made against them and know who to contact if they are concerned about a child. They also display information for parents about what would happen if the setting has concerns that a child may be being abused. Families are supported and protected by the required appropriate policies and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children are developing a sound level of confidence and self esteem because their learning environment is accessible to them and because staff plan activities and a daily routine. There is structure, choice and opportunity for children to develop their relationships and independence. Staff listen to children, are responsive, and most of them have high expectations of what children can achieve. As a result, children happily come into the setting, hang up their belongings and go straight to play, seeking out adults and particular friends to tell their news. Children have a number of chances to be in different small groupings, to have one-to-one time with an adult, and to be a special helper. They feel at home and have photos of their family members

on the 'family board'.

Children are usually happy, settled, and interested in what they are doing because most staff are committed, enthusiastic and well prepared. Activities are carefully planned to cover the Birth to three matters framework and the six areas of learning. They are delivered to groups of varying sizes, as appropriate to the activity. For example, pre-school children sit in groups of up to four to put together their African necklaces. They talk with a staff member about the customs and jewellery of Africa as they thread. The staff member makes use of a suitable reference book to extend the children's understanding of this a little further. There is no pressure to undertake this task and some children prefer to experiment with tubes and bubble making in the water tray. However, not all staff talk consistently to children enough during play to really extend their vocabulary, imagination and creativity. For example, children do not have much adult input into their role plays to fully extend their ideas. Assistants sometimes miss opportunities to question, challenge and develop children's understanding and experiences as they play. This reduces children's enthusiasm and slows their acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Use of the Birth to three matters framework with under three-year-olds is still developing. It is incorporated into plans and is displayed. It is weaved through experiential learning in small groups, for example making music and rhythm, feeling the sand in our bare feet, or using mirrors and hats to see how we look different. Challenges are not always clearly tailored to children's individual stages of development, although better use of a more consistent staff group and the assignment of key workers is now enabling staff to improve their knowledge of individual children's starting points. Some staff are writing observations and evaluations of individual children's progress and are using these to identify their next steps. However, the impact of this work is variable because recording systems are still being organised and some staff are more confident about their practice than others. Staff working with children under two are not confident about recording and say their training consists of 'learning on the job'.

Children in the crèche continue to make good progress as they have fun exploring and making their own choices from interesting and challenging opportunities. They are offered a good balance of free play and adult supervised activities as they develop confidence and strong motivation to learn and progress. Clear and effective planning systems support children's learning and are based upon the Birth to three matters framework. Every child's current level of achievement is established and recorded and the next steps for individual children's learning identified. This is recorded on a pictorial chart to inform and share with parents and offer ideas and activities that they can help with at home. As a result, an ongoing profile of each child's achievements is built up and provides a valuable record as children master skills and progress along the developmental milestones.

Nursery education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere; a varied programme of activities covering all the Areas of Learning; and an approach which fosters good relationships, self-confidence, good social behaviour and high levels of independence. Children understand what

behaviour is expected of them and are making sound progress in most areas of learning. This is because staff are generally successful in providing for children's personal, social and emotional development. This underpins children's ability to learn because it gives them self-confidence and a desire to learn new skills.

Staff are growing in their understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn, although they would value more practical training on this. They are planning and evaluating a broad range of activities according to themes, but do not always remember to question and challenge children to promote their literacy and mathematical development. They record evidence of what children can do under each area of learning and make use of detailed written prompts posters around the pre-school area to remind them of what things a child should be learning as they play in, say, the creative area or the construction area. Some staff know what areas to concentrate upon to meet individual children's needs for their next steps, but some have become a little bogged down with the note taking and are not able to use it to succinctly summarise what things to concentrate upon next. As a result, some adults lack purpose in their interactions with children, tend to concentrate upon health, safety and social aspects and therefore do not maximise children's learning and development, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Resources are used to good effect and the daily routine is simple, so that children undertake a suitable range of activities and have choice and opportunities for one to one, small group and large group activity in the continuous learning environment. Children go out to play whenever weather allows and their large physical skills are developing well as they use the varied equipment and apparatus indoors and outside. They benefit hugely from the sensory garden, hall, sensory room and various outdoor play areas and grounds available to them. In addition, children may access various opportunities and choices outside too, for example sand play, small world play or creative table top activities. Equally, children have some flexibility to choose when to come in for snack and drink.

Children's progress is best in personal, social and emotional development, in physical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because staff create good opportunities for children to acquire independence skills and offer an active and experiential approach to learning. Communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and creative development are sound. Staff have good resources which suit the needs of children and have developed good ideas for aspects such as role play and mark making/writing. However, they do not involve themselves enough in playing alongside children to fully challenge them to achieve as much as they can.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children join in, take responsibility and play a productive part in the setting because the warm environment and friendly staff enable them to feel at home from the outset. Some aspects of the sessions then promote children's sense of belonging and responsibility for themselves and others as they play. For example, children are

given responsibility to help with tidying away and there are special helpers for the day. Children are helped to consider and value diversity because there are various books, dolls, play figures and games which show positive images of culture and special needs. A wealth of posters and pictures are also used around the nursery which show people from other cultures and key words in various languages. Makaton signs are also displayed and some staff are trying to use these more to promote language and communication.

Access for children with physical disabilities is good because there are ramps into the building, smooth doorways to all outside areas and space for easy movement around the setting. Adults are committed to inclusion and are willing to keep up to date by undertaking relevant training. They liaise well with parents and relevant professionals to ensure that they plan and work together, using recognised and consistent techniques which benefit any children with emerging special needs. Regular assessments and evaluations are competently conducted by the special needs coordinator, to ensure that children who have particular needs make as much progress as possible and are taught in an effective way.

Most children behave well and understand responsible behaviour because staff are teaching them how to consider others. Staff use appropriate strategies such as distraction, negotiation and discussion and do not raise their voices. They give clear instructions so that children understand what is expected of them. Staff usually praise children when they help with the clearing up and when they sit well for group time or wait their turn. Sticker rewards may be given for good behaviour too. Children also go to staff for help to resolve disputes when they occur. However, staff are not always proactive enough to manage all aspects of children's activities, movements and behaviour so that noise is minimised. As a result, children do not maximise their learning potential, despite the well set-out learning environment.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children receive consistency of care because staff communicate well verbally with parents and make it clear who their child's key worker is. Staff are approachable, interested and make time to speak to parents. Newsletters and notices keep parents well informed about events, activity plans and the learning intentions of these. They also give ideas of how families can develop children's learning at home. Wall displays are informative about some of the present and previous themes, while the parent notice board gives good information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the Birth to three matters framework. Parents can gain in their knowledge of the curriculum which their child is following because helpful annotated photo albums show how children's activities link to the areas of learning and the stepping stones towards early learning goals.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Recruitment and vetting procedures work adequately to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by suitable staff with qualifications in childcare. Vetting is

conducted centrally by the Pre-school Learning Alliance, but accessible staff files are kept on the premises containing information about recruitment, induction, training and qualifications. Staff are suitably qualified and staff deployment contributes adequately to children's health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff to child ratios are adequate and staff work cooperatively together, knowing who is leading certain activities and making sure that each knows where the others are, to ensure that children are adequately supervised. The staff group is more stable now and there are some more mature members of staff, creating a better balance of experience and enthusiasm than previously.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager has grasped the issues arising at the previous inspection and has developed a clear sense of purpose and action to address these issues. She and her staff have devised a new written 'vision' for the nursery. The manager now ensures that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities, has given them back some of these responsibilities, and is more clearly taking a managerial role, including providing more regular supervision sessions for senior staff. She has overseen a practical rearrangement of the nursery and many improvements to the safety and well-being afforded to children. In addition, the routines of the day are more clearly arranged, children spend more time with their key worker, and the activities of the day are better planned and organised, whilst allowing for a high level of choice for individual children. This is giving staff more confidence and autonomy. However, there is still a tendency to change arrangements too readily, without giving enough time before deciding whether they are successful or not. There is also still insufficient time given for planning and evaluation, including completing individual children's profiles. Nevertheless, room leaders evaluate their strengths and weaknesses quite well and are modelling good practice for their teams. They are open to suggestions about how to improve team working to maximise children's enjoyment and achievement in all aspects of the day.

The organisation of the day care promotes mostly positive outcomes for children because adults share their roles so that they all take part in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the teaching, as well as preparation, setting out and ensuring the safety and cleanliness of the setting. The manager takes some opportunities to improve her knowledge by attending courses and workshops and has held various in-house training and staff meetings to pass on and share this training. For example, she has done operational plan training and has completed an operational plan for the setting which is accessible for all staff to refer to. However, some staff still feel unsure about their abilities to deliver the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. They aim to continue to improve the overall delivery and assessment of teaching to ensure that children enter school having had a good pre-school experience, but many staff have been unable to access training and/or have not been allocated sufficient time and support to get to grips with this fully. This continues to hold back the professional development of an effective staff team.

Policies and procedures work satisfactorily in practice to promote children's safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. For example, child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given and systems for recording accidents, medication, and emergency evacuation practises are robust. There is an uncollected child policy in place and policies for behaviour

management, equal opportunities and child protection explain how the nursery provides for children in these areas. The complaints recording system is in use and follows the recent Ofsted suggested format. Staff and parents now sign in at the nursery entrance, but the daily register in the home rooms is not completely accurate and up to date at all times and staff appear unsure how many children are present. This compromises children's safety and welfare.

The crèche is also provided by the PLA but has a different management structure in place. There is a stable team of three well qualified members who understand their roles and responsibilities and work well together to promote good quality care for children and their families. All required policies and procedures are in place and effectively organised to meet the needs of individual children.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were five actions raised at the first inspection of care and education on 7 November 2005. These have been sufficiently met and they improve the care and nursery education so that is now of a satisfactory standard.

The first action was to increase staff's knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage so that planning and teaching improve:

Staff have received some input from a Level 4 qualified staff appointment and outside trainers and advisors. They have also set out the learning environment so that there can be continuous provision and choice for children to develop their own learning with adult input. In each area there are explanatory notes about what areas of learning the particular provision can promote and how to use it with the children. In addition, planned small group activities are put on by staff using plans which explain how the activity covers certain stepping stones to early learning goals. This improves the quality of the teaching and learning. In addition, it enables staff to make pertinent observation notes and improves their evaluation and recording of individual children's progress. As they utilise the curriculum more throughout their work, they are growing in their understanding of it. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

The second action was to implement a management programme to positively motivate staff and build a committed team to improve the quality of teaching and learning:

The manager has implemented more staff meetings, supervision sessions and some team building to look together at the inspection findings and build a new vision for the nursery. Every staff member also has a clear set of roles and responsibilities delegated to them to clarify their position and recognise their abilities. There is a new induction process, more key working and more consistent staff. The manager has focussed upon the shortcomings identified at the previous inspection and is trying to put processes in place for more effective team working. Staff say that this is having a

positive effect upon their morale. There are timetables for the day and proper activity plans. The manager is standing back from the day to day running and letting staff do this. She has organised the operational plan and is focussing on making sure that the procedures are supporting staff. However, and there is ongoing work to do to secure more improvement in building committed teams and promoting staff's professional development.

The third action was to ensure effective deployment of staff within the premises to ensure safety, welfare and positive development of children:

Staff are working much more consistently within their home areas at present and the key workers are spending more time with their key children. There are enough staff, but they must perform with constant vigilance and involvement to secure best outcomes for children. Staff are doing work in small groups and the pre-school has been divided into two groups to make better use of their areas. The sensory room is better utilised, although not within the themed activities planned. Staff are more aware of their group of children and have removed most hidden areas. They do small group work with children, but some are still spending time left to their own devices in a noisy environment which needs careful management.

The fourth action was to implement effective planning, observation and assessment procedures to enable staff to build upon what children already know and plan the next steps for their individual learning and play:

Staff have come a long way in this. All staff have completed a pre-school Learning Alliance course. The 1 day course was on 14 January 2006 and was 3.75 hours in duration. The course covered child observation techniques & associated record keeping. They have all this in place now and are working hard to implement it. The evidence in some profile books is sufficient and of a high enough standard so that it is clear what children can do and what they need to do next. Staff are making good observational notes and evaluations and using these adequately.

The fifth action was to organise the nursery environment to ensure that it is safe and suitable for the whole range of children:

The senior member of staff in the two to three-year-old area has been tasked with the responsibility for deployment of staff. The whole two to three-year-old's area has been rearranged and each age group has a discreet home area where hidden areas have been removed. The administrative and staff areas have been moved to facilitate this and they are entering into discussion to have internal walls lowered and a door put in between the baby unit and the two to three-year-old area. Noise remains an issue, and the open plan nature of the nursery and lack of sound absorbing materials is not helping.

Complaints 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.

Since the last inspection, Ofsted has received one complaint, on 16th November 2005. The complaint related to National Standard 6: supervision of children; National Standard 8: children's individual dietary requirements not being adhered to; and National Standard 12: working in partnership with parents in relation to responding appropriately to complaints by parents. The Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement Team contacted the provision. The provision provided an investigation response regarding the concerns raised. Ofsted are satisfied the provider remains qualified for registration.

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 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):

- increase all nursery staff's knowledge and understanding of the Birth to three matters framework to build upon current practice and identify next steps for individual children
- ensure that staff are proactive in planning and managing all aspects of children's activities, movements and behaviour, so that distracting noise in the open plan nursery can be minimised and the well-being of all children given top priority
- ensure that daily attendance registers for staff and children are up to date and accurate at all times, in case of emergency.

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):

- ensure that staff question, challenge and support children to achieve as much as they can (applies also to care)
- ensure that effective teams are built and the professional development of all staff promoted, so that they can effectively deliver the Birth to three matters framework and Foundation Stage curriculum.

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