

Sandfield Natural Play Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY342763
Inspection date	30/03/2011
Inspector	Michele Villiers

Setting address	Sandfield House, Lickers Lane, Whiston, Merseyside, L35 3SR
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Telephone number	0151 4266262
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Email

Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Sandfield Natural Play Centre is privately owned and was re-registered in 2006 under new ownership. It operates from several playrooms on the ground floor of a Georgian Grade II listed house situated in Whiston, Merseyside. The nursery is accessible to all children and there is a fully enclosed 1.5 acre Victorian Walled Garden area for outdoor play. Additionally accessed via secure rear gates leading from the nursery garden there is a 6 acre private woodland used for walks, expeditions and pondipping.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday all year round from 7am until 6.30pm. A maximum of 52 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 76 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage, some of whom are part-time. The nursery also offers care to children aged over five years to eight years. It is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds. They support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 12 members of childcare staff. Most hold appropriate early years qualifications at Level 3, three hold a Level 6, one a Level 4, another a Level 5 and one is a fully qualified teacher with Early Years Professional Status. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

All children make significant gains in their learning and development. The educational programme is extremely well organised and excellent systems are in place to monitor the children's progress. Emphasis is placed on the benefits of outdoor play, as well as challenging indoor activities. Close partnerships with parents and other professionals help ensure the children's individual needs are consistently catered for. The children display high levels of confidence and a sense of belonging as they play in a safe and inclusive environment. The management successfully embeds continuous improvement and uses rigorous evaluation systems to identify future plans. Stringent safety measures are in place and most health and hygiene measures are well met.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- ensure the premises are clean, in particular the floor areas where babies and young toddlers may sit or crawl, and further promote the children's

understanding of personal hygiene.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding children is prioritised. Comprehensive policies, strategies and procedures are followed, and designated staff members oversee child protection issues. The rigorous recruitment procedure and ongoing training ensure all staff are suitable and qualified. Good standards of hygiene are generally maintained to help prevent the spread of infection. However, occasionally, rigorous hand cleaning using soap is not always adhered to by children after outdoor play and prior to handling food. Carpet areas and flooring where young toddlers sit and crawl are not always cleaned well after meals or outdoor play. The children demonstrate an extremely strong sense of belonging and an excellent understanding of acceptable behaviour, following rules and boundaries.

The staff have an exceptionally good understanding of how children learn through play. They create a welcoming environment and utilise the play space well with good deployment of toys and interesting activities. All staff have specific roles of responsibility for all areas of learning. This clearly has a strong impact on the quality of the provision and outcomes for children. The manager closely monitors the provision and is highly committed to promoting an inclusive practice. All staff attend ongoing training in order to provide optimum support for all children.

There is a comprehensive evaluation process that involves the views of staff, children and parents, helping to ensure ongoing improvement. The recommendations from the previous inspection has been successfully met. Robust risk assessments and staff attendance records have been introduced to further safeguard children. New initiatives have been firmly embedded in order to help children develop excellent skills for the future. Great emphasis is placed on caring for the environment and the importance of planting, growing and using natural resources. Extensive information is provided for parents. Home visits enable staff to become fully familiar with the children's requirements, initial profile and daily routine. Parents meet with key workers every three months to discuss their children's progress and assessments. Parents become involved in various activities, such as, campfires with the children, charity shows, and 'meet and greet' social gatherings.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

The provision is highly stimulating and the educational programme provides children with rich, varied and imaginative experiences. Assessment through high quality observations is rigorous and the information gained is used very effectively to guide planning. Innovative teaching motivates the children and staff support them well, working with small groups and allowing them to freely make choices. The playrooms are organised well into specific areas, such as, art and craft, role play, construction, and books for story time.

The benefits of outdoor play are paramount in this setting. It is a forested area where children have enhanced opportunities for physical activity, confidence building, creativity, problem solving and contact with the natural world. It allows children to breathe in fresh air, move freely, make a noise and gain a sense of space, colour, light and scale. Children enjoy climbing, planting, making dens and relaxing in hammocks.

Children become thoroughly engrossed in their play and form strong relationships, confidently exploring their environment. They are provided with opportunity and encouragement to competently learn communication, language and literacy skills. Staff constantly use good challenging questioning and use picture images to reinforce the learning. Children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories and staff have set up a library lending system. Children practise writing and mark making, making patterns in the sand, writing lists in the home corner and logging the different birds they see outside. Throughout play, children count and calculate. They examine number cards and circle the number relating to the type of bird spotted at the feeder. During construction they compare size and shape, and when playing with water they learn about volume.

The children have excellent exploration and investigation opportunities. They use magnifying glasses and binoculars to examine bugs, wildlife and plants. The children are able to allow their natural curiosity to run wild and experience the environment first hand, playing outside in all weathers. They create dens using twigs and branches, and make a hide to observe birds. Toddlers and babies explore their senses, playing with sand and water. Indoors, children enjoy various role play activities and explore different interactive and programmable toys, becoming familiar with everyday technology. Young toddlers freely move around and develop body control, balance and coordination using climbing equipment and slides.

The children learn about diversity through various toys and resources, and celebrate different festivals. The staff proactively support all children and ensure activities are not gender specific. The importance of regular exercise as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle is paramount. Staff follow routines for babies, ensuring they sleep and eat when required. Children have their own toothbrushes, learning about dental hygiene, and often sit in the fresh air to eat their meals. They enjoy home-cooked food using fresh ingredients and grow and pick their own vegetables.

The children show a strong sense of security and are given exceptional opportunities to practise using a range of tools and equipment in safety. Outside, under close supervision, children use full size tools to cut, hammer and build. This helps them to show a mature response in taking responsibility for their own and others' safety.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met