



## Secret Garden Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY313786
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 April 2006
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<b>Registered person</b>	Sure Start (LEA)
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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 good. 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 Secret Garden Children's Centre was registered in 2005. It is a designated Sure Start children's centre, managed by Barnsley District Council. A newly established Sure Start team is based within the centre and includes a Health Development Worker, a Health Visitor and a Parent Involvement and Outreach Team, which includes a Family Support Team. There is also an early years and an administrative team. The centre provides a range of outreach services.

It operates in purpose built premises within the grounds of Athersley North Primary School. The nursery has use of a large play base, which is divided into two main areas for children aged under and over 2 years. Children have direct access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area which is landscaped to provide varied play opportunities.

The provision is registered to care for 40 children in the nursery and an additional 26 children in crèche facilities, provided to support parent groups and training courses. The crèche may be provided in one of two multi-purpose rooms.

There are currently 36 children on roll; of these 9 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special needs. It operates from 8.00 to 18.00 each weekday throughout the year. Children can also attend for morning or afternoon sessions.

There are eight staff employed to work directly with the children, all of whom have an appropriate early years qualification. The nursery is supported by a qualified teacher, who is based within the school and an Early Years Consultancy Worker employed by the Local Education Authority. Staff are undertaking the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) quality assurance scheme, Quality Counts.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy physical activity outdoors each day. They frequently go on nature walks in the school grounds and watch the fish in the pond. The children play running and chasing games, using the outdoor play area with delight. They ride bikes, play bat and ball and push their babies up and down the grassy slopes. They learn to control their bodies as they balance carefully along the see-saw, crouch to run through the willow tunnel and leap from the log. They are fascinated by their footprints in the huge sandpit. Toddlers have sturdy toys to push along to support their developing mobility. They clamber over the soft play mats to look at themselves in the mirrors and love bouncing on the trampoline. Staff provide well-balanced and varied opportunities for them to explore and extend their physical skills.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean and well-maintained environment. Staff systematically implement clearly defined health and hygiene guidelines and ensure parents understand about 'unacceptable illnesses'. Children learn good practices through their daily routines; lovely photos in the toilets remind them about the importance of washing hands and they learn that they have to 'wash the germs' off their fingers and wipe the tables before they eat snack. They become increasingly independent in attending to their own individual needs. Arrangements for first aid and administering medication are well considered, agreed with parents and fully protect children.

Children are well-nourished and enjoy a varied menu of freshly cooked, healthy food. Snack and meal times are relaxed and sociable occasions, and staff encourage

conversations about healthy foods. Children make choices and become independent in feeding themselves, and older children are able to use a knife and fork very capably to eat their lunch. Children are offered drinks frequently and older children can access drinks independently.

Key staff liaise closely with parents to establish a shared understanding about their child's care needs and to support consistency as they move through the nursery. Younger children are made to feel special as they enjoy lots of cuddles and gentle conversation. Staff recognise signs of tiredness in babies and toddlers and respond appropriately so that their need for sleep and rest is met well.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in secure and welcoming premises by staff who clearly understand their role in keeping children safe. Comprehensive health and safety procedures are implemented effectively. Staff check the premises daily and take appropriate steps to minimise risks, so that children are protected from potential hazards. Children learn to keep themselves safe as staff involve them in daily discussions and teach them safe practice. For example, they know they must watch carefully for other children when riding the bikes fast and why it is unsafe to walk around nursery carrying scissors. They know what to do when they have fire drills. Staff provide a good balance between freedom and safe limits so that children are appropriately challenged. They teach children how to explore safely, for example when using the mirror table.

Children have access to sufficient, safe space to allow them to enjoy a wide variety of activities. They use a stimulating range of safe and suitable toys and play materials. Resources are of high quality and are well-maintained. They are readily accessible for children to reach independently and the play environment is very effectively organised to allow children to move around freely and safely to develop their own play ideas.

Staff give high priority to protecting children and all staff have recently accessed appropriate training to enhance their understanding of child protection issues. Child protection responsibilities and recording requirements are shared well with parents and children are sensitively supported to share their feelings and make their needs known. Staff's clear understanding of their responsibilities within child protection procedures helps to ensure that children are effectively protected and their welfare fully safeguarded.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children love coming to the nursery; they are settled and secure. They make friends and play together co-operatively. Their individual needs are supported very sensitively by staff who get to know them and their families very well. They develop

self confidence and their self-esteem is nurtured. Staff spontaneously differentiate activities to include all children and meet their different needs. They give priority to supporting development of communication skills, encouraging lots of conversations based on children's interests and home lives. Stories are shared often, and children become very familiar with their favourites. They learn rhymes and sing songs, joining in with lively enthusiasm.

The play environment is well-planned to encourage children to access resources independently and plan their own play. Exploratory and creative play, such as sand, water, crafts and painting, is part of their everyday environment, allowing children to experiment with different media and develop their own creative ideas. For example, they discuss how best to make their chalk picture 'nicely smudged' and use their imagination creatively to make 'junk' models. They cooperate to plan extended role play games and love participating in action rhymes; they are confident to express themselves. Staff encourage children to count and become familiar with number concepts within their everyday routines and activities. Their fine motor skills develop as they roll and cut play dough and draw pictures. Children develop an interest in the world around them. They plan to grow vegetables in their garden.

Staff have introduced use of the Birth to three matters framework to extend and enhance daily opportunities for the younger children. Babies and toddlers play very contentedly, learning to share and enjoy being with others. Staff know children's current interests very well, as they observe them carefully and talk frequently with parents. They have not fully considered the balance of choices and free opportunities for exploratory play within the organisation of the babies' and toddlers' room. Access to paint, sand, water and dough is only planned as an activity, not as part of continuous provision. However, toddlers actively make their wishes known, by getting out an apron, sitting at the paint table and 'asking to paint' and staff respond sensitively to their body language and non-verbal communications. Caring relationships, attentive support and warm interactions give toddlers confidence as they happily explore the stimulating nursery environment.

### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, so that children make sound progress towards the early learning goals. They are confident to try out new experiences, supported by staff with reasonable knowledge of the foundation stage of learning. Children enjoy a wide variety of experiences within the daily environment and they are interested and motivated to learn. Activity planning is well structured and successfully promotes opportunities in all areas of learning. Children access outdoor play at specific times each session but staff have not yet maximised, within planning, the opportunities for learning presented by the outdoor environment. Staff use their knowledge of children's individual interests very well to extend their learning. Children can access resources independently.

Children enjoy coming to the nursery. They play cooperatively and use initiative as they make choices; they concentrate well and persevere to complete activities. They are becoming confident communicators and happily share their own ideas and experiences, and are encouraged to use language to describe, recall and explain. Children love stories, they listen attentively and contribute enthusiastically, using

story 'props'. Older children recognise and practice writing their name, and enjoy linking sounds and letters. The planned environment does not systematically encourage writing for real purposes. Children count and use numbers very ably in everyday activities. They make a tall tower and count 13 blocks, use comparative language confidently in their construction play and work out how many cups they need for snack. They use a chart to measure who is tallest. They participate often in number rhymes, actively exploring more and less.

Children are very interested in the world around them. They learn about the seasons and growth as they make bird feeders in winter and plant bulbs in spring. They explore full, empty, heavy and light as they pour water and sieve sand. They have free opportunity for spontaneous expression of their own creativity, for example as they make models of dogs and design a horse mask. They learn about the wider world and other cultures as they find out about how people celebrate festivals.

Staff routinely observe children in varied ways in their play experiences, identifying what they know and can do. These observations are fully shared by staff on an informal basis. However, they are not used sufficiently effectively to inform how activities are to be differentiated or in consistently planning for next steps in children's learning. This means that more able children are not always consistently challenged within their everyday play.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for by familiar and well known staff and carefully planned transitions between rooms help children move happily to the next stage, supported by secure and trusting relationships. Shared play and family group times enhance children's close links with all staff and with each other, helping them to develop a strong sense of belonging to the nursery. Children become familiar with routines, participate confidently at group times and enjoy helping with daily tasks.

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour as they return toys to the shelves when they finish playing and help to tidy up for lunch. Staff gently and consistently reinforce rules and boundaries. Good behaviour is sensitively encouraged and reward charts are used skilfully to engage children. Most children play together very harmoniously as they develop imaginary games in the home corner and share tools in the play dough. They learn to think about their own needs and the needs of others as they share the bikes and take turns at the paint table. Staff help them to resolve difficulties together, so they are confident they will have a turn.

Children learn about the world around them, as staff plan activities raising their awareness of living things and of the lives and festivals of people in other countries. Visitors to the nursery stimulate their interest. They learn about people who help us, for instance, the road safety officer. Occasional outings, for example to the post office or shops, help to promote their awareness of their local community. They confidently make choices and decisions as they plan their own play. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The nursery establishes a very good partnership with parents and carers. Parents are fully involved in helping to settle their child, and key staff liaise closely with them on a daily basis to share information about their child's needs and interests. Information about younger children's routines and activities is shared using daily feedback sheets. Staff communicate very effectively with all parents to develop shared strategies to ensure consistency with home. Parents relationships with staff are relaxed and comfortable, promoting children's sense of security.

The key worker shares all policies and procedures with parents and ensures they know how to raise any concerns. Parents receive an information pack when their child starts nursery, which includes details of the foundation stage curriculum and the Birth to three matters framework. They are readily able to access their child's 'Learning Journey' development record and staff encourage parents to become actively involved in their child's learning. For example, they provide activity sheets to share at home with their child, and parents can also borrow books and access a toy loan scheme. Open days are planned to offer more formal opportunity to learn about their child's progress.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery environment is well organised to ensure children's welfare and safety. Daily routines are clearly planned and flexibly implemented to respond to children's varying needs and interests. Staff are deployed effectively, although staff rotas do impact on children's access to the outdoor environment and on staff roles at lunchtime, which affects children's experiences.

Children's care and education are supported by satisfactory leadership and management. Staff work together as a very effective team and children's experiences are enhanced by staff's access to appropriate training and development opportunities. Staff review and evaluate their own practice effectively. Monitoring and evaluation processes are being developed to help staff to identify strengths and areas for improvement, but do not yet fully inform practice.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are effectively implemented so that children's welfare is safeguarded. Required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well being is in place and is regularly reviewed. Policies and procedures are in process being updated to reflect current practice and recent guidance. Robust procedures are in place to ensure staff suitability but there are not clear systems to ensure changes are notified promptly. Staff have suitable skills and experience to work with children. Parent's wishes regarding their child's care clearly influence day to day practice and clear written agreements are recorded.

Overall the nursery promotes children's well-being and effectively meets the individual needs of the range the children who attend.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There are no complaints made to Ofsted.

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**

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 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 range of opportunities freely accessible in the continuous provision for younger children, perhaps by further enhancing staff confidence in use of the Birth to three matters framework
- ensure clear systems are in place to notify changes and significant events and ensure all policies and procedures reflect current practice and new guidance
- monitor the impact of staff rotas on children's experiences.

#### **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):

- plan to maximise the learning opportunities offered by the outdoor environment and encourage children's freer access to it
- more closely link observations of children's progress to activity planning, to provide greater challenge within the everyday environment
- further develop systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning.

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