

Little Harwood Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY336018
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Inspector	Ann Bamford
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Registered person	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
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

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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Harwood Children's Centre opened in 2007. It is situated adjacent to St Stephens Primary School in the centre of little Harwood in Blackburn. It is operated by Blackburn with Darwen Local Authority.

Day care is provided within a designated nursery environment which incorporates six open plan areas. Children have access to a baby room, a toddler room, a sensory room, a quiet room and then an open plan space which is laid out to allow children freedom to move through a variety of activity areas. There are integral toilet and kitchen facilities. Each area of the setting has its own designated outdoor play area. A separate crèche facility is also provided.

The setting has a total of 27 staff; of these, 23 hold qualifications in childcare and education at Level 3 or above and two hold Level 2 awards. There are two early years qualified teachers in the setting, one of whom works full time during school term times.

Care is available from 08.00 until 18.00 each weekday. The centre closes during bank holidays and for seven further days per year on a planned basis.

At the time of inspection there were 172 children on roll, 11 of whom attend on a full time basis. The setting supports many children who have English as an additional language and learning difficulties and disabilities.

A maximum of 100 children may attend the nursery at any one time. A maximum of twelve children may attend the crèche.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The setting is very clean and has effective processes in place to ensure that this remains so. Children are actively involved in routines. They are developing effective skills in keeping the environment clean as they clean up after snack time. Staff pass their sound knowledge of good hygiene practice onto children in words of encouragement and praise. This increases children's self-confidence to do the job well.

Children's continued good health is significantly enhanced as the setting works very effectively to find out about children's individual health needs from parents. The individual plans for helping children with allergies or asthma are supportive of children's individual needs. Children's access to other health professionals, such as a health visitor or dental hygienist, is greatly improved by the settings imaginative approach to linking the family in with local practitioners.

There are policies and procedures in place to ensure that staff have appropriate and current training on first aid and administration of specific medication. Staff knowledge of health issues, such as childhood asthma and other illnesses, contribute to the settings overall commitment to ensuring that children have enhanced good health.

Children are nourished very effectively as the staff make excellent use of snack time to encourage children to eat healthily. Children have access to portions of fruit per day and they really enjoy the range available to them. All children eat the fruit provided. Children are developing a really good awareness of healthy bodies as they talk about germs. They go out on walks and use the experience to look at how exercise affects their bodies.

Children enjoy physical activity as they pedal, balance, hop and kick using bikes, large equipment and footballs. They work effectively and collaboratively to build a large construction which requires balance and manipulative skills. Babies and young children have extensive use of the outdoor area, even during rain or snow, which aids their development of strong bones. In the pre-school area children are developing excellent fine motor skills as they use tools and equipment with increasing dexterity. They create wooden pictures using nails or use scissors and hammers skilfully. Children can rest or sleep in line with their individual needs as they snuggle up on cushions or use the book area to sit quietly.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are very safe in the setting. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that this remains so at all times. Policies and procedures for ensuring that adults who have access to children are suitable, are followed with attention to detail. Staff are highly competent at risk assessment and their confidence to explain clearly what they are doing to children enhances

children's safety significantly. Children are developing an overt ability to keep themselves and others safe in the centre as they tidy away equipment, clear up spilt sand and go and get a staff member to protect a slippery area of floor. All children are developing confidence to identify risks and the ability to take steps to reduce them with increasing independence.

The setting has developed an outstanding use of support systems of ancillary and maintenance workers to enhance the safety of children. The day to day cleaning and maintenance of the building is effective and timely as damaged lighting or a sticking door is attended to immediately.

Children confidently use a wide range of suitable and very safe equipment as staff plan the layout of the room extremely carefully to allow children to move freely. Staff's constant attention to the safety of the room and equipment ensures that children remain entirely safe when engaged in play outdoors and indoors. Older children teach younger children how to keep themselves safe in a delightfully caring and knowledgeable manner. For example, they hold hands and tell each other to put their feet down carefully to avoid falling or support each other as they climb the steps in the large activity area describing what they are doing to stay safe.

Children are developing a good knowledge of how to act in the event of a fire as they take part in regular fire practises and can describe what they do in the event of the alarm sounding.

Children are protected by staff's knowledge and understanding of their role in safeguarding children. However, the written process to be followed in the event of an allegation about a member of staff or volunteer lacks some clarity and as a result, staff knowledge of what to do is not as fully confident as in other areas of safeguarding children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they register their presence and move into their colour coded group. The setting plans to encourage children to do things for themselves. They are encouraged to select their own activities for significant amounts of time. Children know the routine and develop the confidence to operate successfully in it with decreasing support from adults. Children's success at doing this enhances their skills as competent learners as they organise themselves.

Children are purposefully engaged in activity throughout the whole of their time spent in the setting. Staff organise the environment and equipment in a way which allows children to take responsibility for their learning. All equipment is stored in a way that can be accessed by children, allowing them to change activities or equipment as they wish.

Staff involve children fully in the setting. Children are actively encouraged to have an input into planning what topics will be covered, what equipment will be needed and how each session will be ordered. For example, children choose equipment they want to develop the outdoor area. As a result of this children 'own' the environment and are active in ensuring that the room and equipment are treated with care.

In the baby room and the toddler room staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They use it well to plan activities for children. They make skilful use of observations to plan next steps for individual children. In the pre-school room plans for children's learning are made using the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. They are divided into the six areas of early learning. Plans are made for children's next steps as a whole group

but are not yet consistently made from observations of what individual children can already do. This affects the rate that individual children learn.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff have a strong understanding of the Foundation Stage and are using their knowledge to further develop each other. Comprehensive planning, which covers all areas of learning, is linked to the group of children's next steps in their learning. The setting has begun to use individual observations of children to plan next steps but this is not yet consistently used. Assessments of children's learning securely derive from observations of children's achievements linked to the stepping stones of progress. The planning of the environment and use of some innovative organisation assists teaching and children's learning, making every area accessible and meaningful to children. For example, all equipment in the setting is stored at child height meaning children can choose equipment they think will contribute to topics.

Children are becoming confident communicators and readily ask questions of visitors. Many are beginning to ascribe meaning to marks and listen to stories with interest and understanding. Their creativity is developing well as they join in songs or sing full songs unaided, and use musical instruments spontaneously. Staff make excellent use of singing songs to extend children's interest and enhance concentration as children readily join in with a song about a boat sinking when pouring and playing in the water tray. They use imagination along a theme, for example, playing in the home corner being different members of a family, using a variety of clothing to play different roles. All children are happy and settled in the centre, they separate well from parents or carers. They are developing friendships. Children are developing the concept of numbers being less or more than as they put out plates at snack time or count the number of beans each child has in a planned group activity. They are starting to use positional language in their play and can tell which child is the biggest and smallest with accuracy. Children show natural curiosity and begin to use tools, such as pencil sharpeners, for a purpose. Children are able to use information technology equipment competently as they use a simple programme on the computer or engage in unblocking a printer in order to make it work again.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children and their parents receive a very warm welcome into the nursery. They have a clear sense of belonging as they identify their own shape and peg on which to hang their coat. Staff in the centre work hard to encourage children to do things for themselves, they ensure that aprons are easily accessible, that coats are put on before help is given with zips and that children put on their own shoes. Children have access to a wide range of opportunities, which encourages their understanding of diversity, for example, play with multi-cultural dolls and clothes, kitchen utensils, books and jigsaws. Many planned activities are provided linked to both children's own customs and those of the wider community. Children are developing a very strong understanding of the community they live in as they go out into it on a regular planned basis.

There is a robust policy for meeting additional need. The setting supports children who are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities and are active in identifying children who may need additional help at an early stage. Staff are skilled in working as part of a multi-disciplinary team in order to meet children's needs. Staff attend training regularly to ensure that they have knowledge and understanding of how to meet individual needs as they arise.

Children behave very well. They are developing strong strategies for making friendships, taking turns and settling disputes as staff are excellent role models who regularly talk about being kind to each other and their own feelings. Children develop good strategies for sharing as staff encourage them to use a timer to plan when a favourite toy is handed over to another child who wants it. Children are given skilful individual support to succeed in situations that they find difficult, such as circle time. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. The setting is in the process of developing strategies for communicating effectively with parents. They are welcomed into the setting on every level. There is a range of high quality information that is offered to parents in a variety of ways. Information on how care and education is provided is of a high standard and is given to parents in written form as well as by talking directly to them. However, the setting has not yet developed a means of sharing policies and procedures on how care is offered with parents. The format for complaints, comments and compliments is transparent and available for any parent to look at any time. Parents are involved in their child's learning in the setting as they look at their child's learning journal or meet with the key worker in a timetabled meeting to discuss their child's progress. Parents speak highly of the staff commitment to their children in the new setting and the settings provision of care and education to their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Effective recruitment procedures mean that safe, suitable practitioners work with the children. The mainly qualified staff team make good use of opportunities for continuous professional development, which enhances children's care and learning. For example, staff have attended induction training and training in relation to the Foundation Stage curriculum, first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding children. Training is planned to ensure that any requiring updating, such as first aid, is done in a timely fashion. Staff are very well deployed according to their skills and experience. Records in the setting have begun to positively support safe care of children. They were all current and available for inspection. There are effective procedures developing for sharing records with parents.

Leadership and management is good. A strong leadership team with defined roles and responsibilities has effectively supported staff and children through an immense period of change, as the setting had been recently opened to take on the function of three different settings. The setting has good systems for managing difficulties before they have an impact on children, for example, additional senior workers in the setting in case of unforeseen difficulties. Staff are well supported through both formal and informal meetings. The clear focus of these ensure that staff develop enhanced skills in helping children make effective progress in each area of development. There is a clear vision for the future, which is deep rooted in the setting's commitment to successful integrated working and to developing quality practise. The manager has a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for future improvement.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. 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 good.

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 child protection policy to ensure that the procedure on action in the event of an allegation about a member of staff or volunteer is clear
- continue to develop the use of written observations to plan the next steps for children's play, learning and development in each area of the nursery (also applies to nursery education)
- continue to develop frameworks which give parents information on details of policies and procedures which are available to parents.

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):

- 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 *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk