

Seacroft Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	512400
Inspection date	09 October 2007
Inspector	Abigail Caroline Cunningham
Setting Address	South Parkway, Seacroft, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS14 6EP
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Registered person	Leeds City Council
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 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?

Seacroft Children's Centre is one of many children's centres run by Leeds City Council. It opened in 1998 and operates from five rooms within a purpose-built building. It is situated in Seacroft, Leeds. A maximum of 60 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00, apart from Wednesday when the children's centre closes early for staff training at 15.00. The setting is open for 52 weeks of the year. The children have access to three outdoor play areas.

There are currently 98 children aged from one year to under five years on roll. Of these, 36 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the surrounding area. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The setting employs 27 members of staff. Most of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and two members of staff are working towards early years degrees. Additionally, the children's centre manager and the assistant manager both hold an early years degree in leadership and management. The setting receives support from the local authority and the emphasis is on learning through play.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The setting employs a cook, who has completed food hygiene training. Meals are mostly made from freshly prepared ingredients. Therefore, the children receive a good range of healthy and wholesome meals, such as shepherds pie, carrots, peas, cauliflower, Yorkshire puddings and gravy. Fresh fruit is readily available for children to help themselves to during snack time. Meal times are a sociable event, for example, the staff sit with the children and they chat happily together. The children have independent access to drinks at all times. Planned activities, such as growing potatoes and carrots and making and tasting soup introduce children to healthy ingredients.

The staff take positive steps to promote the good health of children, for example, staff wear gloves and aprons during nappy changing and the nappy changing mats are kept clean and in good condition. Each child has their own bedding, which is washed regularly and prevents cross-contamination.

Good arrangements are in place for administering first aid and medication. There are four members of staff who hold a current first aid certificate, and some of the staff have received additional training in order to meet children's individual medical needs. Written policies are in place regarding sickness, accidents and administration of medication; these are fully implemented and shared with all parents.

The children have daily opportunities for fresh air and outdoor play, such as freely accessing the outdoor play area. The children are able to play out in all weathers, for example, the setting provides the children with suitable outdoor shoes and umbrellas to use in wet weather. In warm weather, staff erect temporary shades to protect children from the sun. The children show an awareness of their own needs with regard to eating and hygiene, for example, three-year-old children independently help themselves to fruit at the snack table and they wash their own hands after messy play. The children move in a range of ways, such as running and jumping. They can also adjust their speed to successfully avoid objects, for example, while playing on the scooters and tricycles. The children engage in an excellent range of activities requiring hand eye coordination, such as mark making and painting. They can manipulate objects and enjoy activities which promote this, such as threading.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Child protection procedures are excellent. The children are protected from possible abuse or neglect as staff implement child protection procedures which are robust, fully understood and work in practice. For example, all staff have completed child protection training and the settings child protection procedure is shared with parents. The staff are very experienced in working in partnership with social services. They are skilled at recognizing, recording and reporting concerns. The senior management team have regular meetings with a link social worker, to identify families who require additional support and places. As a result, the incidents of referrals has reduced.

Space is used constructively and activities are well organised. Toys and equipment are on low-shelves and carpeting and the children independently choose their own activities. Additionally, movement areas are available throughout the setting. All areas are well resourced

with good quality products which are mostly made of natural materials, such as wooden furniture and toys. The children have direct access to the outdoor play areas from each of the playrooms and the children happily free-flow in and out. As a result, the children enjoy playing outside and spend a great deal of their time outdoors. There are plans in place to make further improvements to the outdoor play areas, for example, the setting would like to provide a permanent shaded area for the babies.

There is an excellent range of toys, furniture and equipment available, which meets the needs of all children attending, such as cots and low-level tables and chairs. Toys and resources are in good condition and are regularly cleaned and checked. Staff use most of the equipment effectively, however, some children are not given age-appropriate utensils for eating. For example, some three-year-olds are given knives and forks to eat with, before they are developmentally ready. There are very comfortable areas throughout the playrooms for staff and parents to sit with the children for a cuddle and a story.

Children benefit from a good range of safety measures, for example, socket covers and safety gates are used. The children rehearse emergency evacuations at regular intervals. The outside play area is secure, which prevents unwanted visitors entering. The children are supervised at all times, are unable to leave the premises unattended and are never left alone with persons who have not been vetted. For example, while stay-and-play sessions are operating, parents and carers are only responsible for the care of their own children. The system for managing access to the premises is extremely good, for example, a secure door entry system is in place. As a result, unauthorised persons are unable to gain entry and a record is kept of visitors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff working with the younger children have attended 'Birth to three matters' training. They have an excellent understanding of how to implement the framework and do this very successfully. For example, planning and assessment systems are very effective for this age group. They provide the children with positive role models, which encourages them to communicate very well with one another. Staff consistently talk to young children explaining what they are doing, which encourages children to link words and label objects. For example, a one-year-old was playing in the movement area with a large exercise ball and correctly said 'ball'.

Babies' emotional needs are well met as they receive plenty of individual attention and cuddles. They are made to feel special by key persons and parents handing young babies directly to each other at the beginning and end of the day. Staff are effectively deployed so that a significant member of staff is available to care for the babies and young children at all times.

The staff are motivated and their enthusiasm inspires the children in their play. The children are very happy, settled and confident in the setting and enjoy learning. For example, a small group of children became very excited as they jumped and splashed about in the puddles in the outside play area. Plans provide a broad range of practical activities which develop children's knowledge and understanding. The children have excellent opportunities to be involved in messy play; this is throughout all age groups, such as babies playing with the sand. The staff encourage the children to try new activities, for example, playing with corn flour.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have attended training on the Foundation Stage and competently put this into practice. The staff skilfully question the children, for example, during story time. Therefore, it is easy to ascertain just what the children know, understand and can do. The staff are organised, for example, all areas are well stocked and planned activities are taking place. The staff show a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and provide a wide range of activities and experiences to cover all areas of children's learning. Planning is flexible and the activities provided are well matched to children's needs and interests, for example, the staff re-evaluate the planning on a regular basis. Assessment records for each child clearly show the children's approach to learning, their achievements and their progress, however, they do not show planning for children's individual next steps in learning.

The children settle quickly, part easily from their parents, and enjoy the rich environment provided for them by the staff. The learning environment is appealing with good quality resources which tempt the children's curiosity so that they try new things, such as exploring sounds made by different instruments and experimenting with mark making and corn flour.

All children have a positive approach to new experiences and display high levels of involvement in activities, for example, while building with large wooden bricks in the outside play area. The children are happy to initiate interactions with other people, for example, one child approached an adult to explain that the corn flour feels sticky. The children select resources independently and are able to assert their own needs and preferences.

The children enjoy looking at books. Story time is organised effectively as the children are read to in small groups, which works well as the children are able to sit quietly and maintain attention. The children handle books correctly and more-able children listen to stories with increasing attention and recall. More-able children are beginning to form recognisable letters and they can read familiar words, such as their own and other children's names. However, the children do not have regular opportunities to link sounds to letters.

The children enjoy counting and use size language during play, such as big and little. A three-year-old recognised and named numerals from nought to four. With the staff's support the children are beginning to show an interest in number problems, for example, while sharing out the birthday cake in the home corner.

The children are confident in using everyday technology, and selecting tools, and they construct using a range of materials. They have regular opportunities to learn about the natural world, such as planting bulbs and observing the frogs in the pond. Children are given opportunities to discuss past and present events in their lives, for example, going to hospital in an ambulance. The children use available prompts to support their role play and more-able children play alongside other children engaged in the same theme, such as playing princesses with the play figures. Overall, children make good progress towards the early learning goals given their capability and starting points.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The staff team are very experienced in identifying and working with children with learning difficulties and disabilities. As a result, the centre has excellent procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The staff team are committed to working in partnership with parents and outside agencies to ensure children receive excellent support, for example, the setting is working as part of a local inclusion project. The staff have also attended

additional medical training in order to meet children's specific needs, which clearly demonstrates their commitment to ensuring that all children are able to access the centre. The staff utilise space and equipment within the setting very well and activities are adapted to enable all children to take part. Very positive steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of each child, for example, regular meetings are held with parents and other agencies. Statements and individual education plans are fully implemented and the activities encourage the children's confidence and independence in all areas of development.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The staff are exceptionally warm and welcoming to children and adults. As a result, the parents feel genuinely welcomed into the centre. Staff actively seek out the parents view and opinions in order to improve practice. For example, many parents have completed 'have your say' slips. As a result, the staff have received many positive comments and thank you cards from parents who clearly appreciate the staff's support. Parents have excellent opportunities to share what they know about their child through regular discussions with staff, formal meetings and an effective settling in procedure, such as a home visit. Additionally, the various notice boards throughout the building prominently display relevant information, such as staff photographs and information regarding the children's experiences while using the centre. Further information is available through the setting's policy file which is easily accessible to parents. The parents receive very clear information about the educational provision, through discussions with staff and regular letters home. The parents are very much inspired to be involved in their child's learning. For example, they confidently access their child's assessment records and some parents add their observations and comments to these. There is an open door policy and parents can stay and play with their children. As a result, many parents arrive early at the setting and enjoy spending time playing with their child, prior to the play session starting. Additionally, parents are invited to join in with various groups, such as the topical Tuesday group, which offers creative activities for families.

The children are well behaved, for example, they share, take turns and enjoy helping the staff. The staff working with the younger children encourage them to use good manners. However, staff working with the funded children, do miss valuable opportunities to encourage the children to say 'please' and 'thank you', for example, during meal times.

The children develop a positive attitude to others and a good understanding about the wider world and community. This is achieved through various activities, such as listening to music from different countries. The children have access to an excellent range of resources which show positive images, such as empathy dolls, books, play figures, dressing up and cooking utensils. The children also go out for walks in the local community, for example, they visit other children's centres in the area and have visits from the fire service. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The provision of additional services is a strength of the children's centre. There is an excellent selection of groups available, which positively promote all the five outcomes for children, enhancing the children's health, safety, care, well-being and opportunities. The additional services are extremely well established. The forward thinking staff at the centre work extremely closely with other dedicated professionals from various backgrounds, such as health and social services. The groups include: an ante-natal support group; domestic violence support; a stopping smoking support group; a good grub club; a low-cost fruit and vegetable stall; a counselling service; complimentary health; and numerous other groups.

The senior management team and the staff have created an extremely welcoming and inclusive environment in which to care for the children. Staffing ratios are consistently high and as a result, the children are given excellent support and encouragement. The staff team are dynamic and consistently work exceptionally well as a team. For example, they recognise and use each others strengths and areas of expertise to significantly improve the outcomes for children and their families. The staff team are highly motivated and committed to improvement. For example, there are comprehensive delivery plans and nursery improvement plans in place. Additionally, the setting recently completed an Inclusion Charter Mark and they have just started the Leeds Quality Assurance scheme.

The leadership and management of the nursery education are outstanding. The children's centre's teachers provide leadership that is extremely forward thinking. They carefully monitor the curriculum and the children's progress and know how to organise and manage both staff and resources to improve the outcomes for children. The children's centre's teachers have clear plans in place for improvement, which are addressed with staff during weekly planning and training sessions. All the staff are fully involved in planning, evaluating and developing practice, for example, through staff meetings, planning meetings and personal development plans. Planning is thorough and clearly reflects the continuous provision, the different areas of learning and responds to individual children's needs and interests. The system is easy to follow, and all staff working with the funded children know how each part fits together. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care and nursery education inspection the setting has improved the children's registration system, as children's arrival and departure times are now recorded. Partnership with parents has been strengthened as the setting has made the complaints procedure accessible to parents and they have also provided the parents with a suggestions box and have your say leaflets. The staff have received continual training in regards to the Foundation Stage and the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, the staffs knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage has been consistently developed.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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 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 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):

- encourage the children to use good manners
- provide the children with appropriate cutlery during meal times, which matches their individual needs and developmental stages.

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):

- provide regular opportunities for children to link sounds to letters
- ensure the children's assessment records, clearly identify individual plans for the next steps in learning.

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