

Norcot Early Years Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY257099
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Inspector	Jenny Scarlett
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Registered person	The Governing Body of Norcot Early Years Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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

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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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Norcot Nursery opened in 1953 and became an Early Years Centre in June 2004. Norcot was designated as Reading Borough Council's first Children's Centre. It is managed by the Head of Centre and the Senior Management Team under the auspices of the school governing body. The Children's Centre is located in Tilehurst, a suburb of Reading in Berkshire. Norcot Early Years Centre consists of a maintained nursery school and an out of school club housed in Hillside and Meadowside buildings and a day care nursery housed in Waterside. The day care nursery is situated in a single storey, open-plan, purpose built building. All the buildings have their own fully enclosed outdoor play areas. The children's centre serves the local community.

The Children's Centre provides full day care for 50 children from birth to eight years of age in the Waterside building, and out of school care for 45 children aged from three to eight years of age in either the Hillside or Meadowside buildings. There are currently 91 children aged from two months to under five years on roll with varied sessions offered. Of these, nine children receive funding for nursery education. There are currently 15 children from three years to seven years on roll for after school care and up to 25 children on roll during holiday times. Children come from a wide geographical area. The day care nursery and out of school club support a

number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also support a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The day care nursery is open from 08.00 to 18.00, all year round except for the Christmas holiday, bank holidays and inset days. The out of school club is open from 8.00 to 18.00 during school holiday periods and before and after school during term times.

There are currently 54 staff members employed in the Early Years Centre. Of these, 15 members of staff are employed to work in the day care nursery, eleven of whom have early years qualifications. Other professionals and specialists including family support, health visitors and speech and language therapists are based at the children's centre.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about the importance of personal hygiene through consistent daily routines. They are able to access the bathroom independently and know to wash their hands before meals and after using the toilet. Anti-bacterial hand gel is taken when children are off site and they confidently use the gel to wash their hands before they have their snack in the woods. Children remain healthy because staff implement excellent hygiene procedures. For example, they clean tables with anti-bacterial spray and wear disposable gloves to change nappies and when dealing with toileting accidents. This helps to provide a clean and healthy environment.

Children receive immediate attention in the event of an accident because a high proportion of staff are qualified in first aid. Accident records are quickly and accurately recorded and parents are informed immediately when rare accidents such as head injuries occur. Staff receive specific training for children requiring specific emergency medication so that they can meet their individual needs. Medication is administered by senior staff and all statutory documentation is in place for staff to complete when administering any medication to children. However, not all administration records in the holiday club are accurately recorded with details of the time the medication was given or parents countersigning the entry. This does not ensure children's good health.

All meals and snacks the children enjoy at the children's centre are very healthy. A cook is employed at the centre and she prepares all the meals including special diets. The majority of foods and provisions are fresh and from local producers, and, as a result, children have a very well balanced diet. Children are developing an understanding of the importance of healthy eating through well planned topics. These include visits to the supermarket to buy ingredients to make their sandwiches for afternoon tea and planting and growing their own vegetables and fruits in the garden. Staff are highly effective in supporting younger children and children with additional needs to develop their independence, for example by learning to feed themselves. Older children are actively involved in setting tables and serving their own meals. Children attending the out of school club enjoy pre-packed lunch boxes prepared by their parents and a cooked tea prepared at the children's centre. They independently open their own packaging and enjoy the calm atmosphere as they sit with their friends and listen to soft music which helps them relax. Children's allergies and dietary requirements are clearly displayed, to ensure their individual needs are met and respected at all times when snacks and meals are provided. Meal times throughout the children's centre are relaxed family occasions. Staff sit and chat with children and talk about their day. Children in day care thoroughly enjoy the family setting

and show a healthy appetite in the meals offered. They confidently serve themselves and take responsibility by choosing the size of portions and amount that they wish to eat. Those with healthier appetites happily tuck into seconds.

Outdoor learning is heavily promoted throughout the setting in conjunction with the centre's 'Learning through nature' scheme. Staff's training in Norway to gain knowledge and experience in promoting outdoor learning for children enables them to plan and provide exciting activities on and off site for children. As a result, children gain fantastic experiences when they visit the nearby woods. They negotiate how to get down slippery slopes, stamp through piles of leaves and explore ways to cross the rope bridge made by staff. They develop confidence to move between the trees using the ropes to balance and some children explore ways to swing and move their bodies confidently. Children gain good stamina to negotiate steps, climb steep slopes and clamber over old tree trunks. They use their imagination well as they pretend to be lions or dragons and eagerly chase each other and the staff to the nearest bench. Children enjoy a wide range of energetic physical activities in the garden where they are adept in their physical skills. The outdoor play areas are vibrant and equally exciting for all age groups and provide plenty of opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. As a result children are adept in their physical skills as they learn to climb and swing with ropes. They have room to run and move around and have exciting areas to play and hide. Children can smell and feel the different plants and create their own physical challenges in the outdoor play areas.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive in the warm, welcoming, bright and vibrant environment that staff have created within the centre. Attractive displays featuring photographs and books of children at play line the walls. Staff have paid excellent attention to providing a safe environment where children's safety and security is assured. Older children are able to develop independence as they take themselves to the bathroom or go to their bags in the cloakroom area. Children benefit from an extremely wide and varied selection of stimulating toys, resources and play equipment which is suitable for their ages and development needs. They can access toys and resources easily and safely, as they are able to help themselves freely from the low level storage units.

Children benefit from an extremely safe and secure purpose built environment. Detailed health and safety policies and procedures and comprehensive written risk assessments ensure staff are fully aware of their individual roles and responsibilities towards the safety of the children. Staff are vigilant and children are kept safe and well supervised at all times. Children are gently reminded of the rules and are learning to keep themselves safe through discussion and daily routines. For example, the older children know they must line up before going outside and remind each other to walk within the white lines when walking to and from the site and not to run indoors. Children learn about issues such as road safety when going on outings and develop excellent road sense as they identify when it is safe to cross the road.

Children are protected very well because all staff have an in-depth knowledge of child protection issues. They recognise their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children in their care and know how to implement the setting's and local child protection procedures. The recording of all staff, children and visitors to and from the provision contributes to ensuring children are safeguarded from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are relaxed, secure, confident and happy in this children's centre. They are making excellent progress in their learning and development because staff have a superb understanding of how to support and encourage children. Staff spend time working with small groups and individual children, they are aware of children's individual interests and strengths and they build on these by skilfully encouraging children to develop wider interests as they extend their play into new areas. There is an effective key worker system in place. As a result all children build excellent relationships with their key worker and thrive in the exciting range of activities and experiences offered to them.

Children communicate extremely well using words and gestures such as signing and Makaton. They increase in confidence as staff respond back appropriately and understand what their gestures and signs mean. All staff working in the setting have an excellent knowledge and understanding of child development and those working with the younger children make excellent use of the Birth to three matters framework to guide their planning and observations of children's progress. They provide an exciting and stimulating learning environment, in which young children initiate much of their own learning, helping them to develop high levels of independence and competence in the early stages of their learning.

Babies flourish as they explore textures when making chocolate crispy cakes. They taste the mixture and become excited as they observe staff put the chocolate mix into the cases. Some babies attempt with some success to fill the case with the crispy mix, others are more than happy to eat the mixture off the spoon or out of the case. Staff are confident to allow the children to explore with the mix and babies clearly relish the opportunity to taste the ingredients whilst being supported and encouraged by the staff.

Toddlers enjoy making sandwiches for their afternoon tea. They develop skills in spreading butter on bread and make informed choices in the fillings they would like in their sandwich. Some children are clearly aware of their likes and dislikes and just wish to have jam in their sandwich. Others are more adventurous and confidently choose ham, jam, tomato and cucumber. Older toddlers develop early counting skills as they count five slices of cucumber in their sandwich and inform staff they want the sandwich cut in to squares. Children show excellent concentration skills as they achieve tasks such as making sandwiches; others sit persevering when completing puzzles. Young children's love of books is nurtured by staff who provide a quiet, cosy area for children to explore books. As a result, toddlers access this area on their own with staff or with others to look at books, sing to themselves or look at the pictures.

Children attending the holiday club are happy, confident and are able to initiate their own activities. Activities are varied and exiting and staff introduce new ideas, such as making bird feeders, lemonade, planting seeds or exploring rain clouds in the water tray, for the children to take forward throughout the day. This allows the day to flow smoothly whilst allowing children choices and time to complete activities they have instigated.

Tea club provides a new perspective for those children requiring additional care after nursery school. They arrive excitedly to a new room layout with areas to play without being constantly observed by staff. They choose the activities they wish to play with and use their imagination well as they negotiate roles for being mother and baby on the climbing equipment outside. Some make music in the garden using sticks and empty water canisters and bamboo chimes. They develop rhythm as they tap and bang and explore loud and soft sounds.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The staff have an excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Children are active learners, they are able to make choices, to select resources and to initiate activities for themselves within a carefully planned environment. Staff routinely observe and record children's interests and progress and use this information well to plan for their next steps. Staff are skilled at knowing and building on children's particular interests. Their learning is extended according to their individual needs and as a result children make excellent progress. Children's personal development is outstanding because staff understand child development and know all the children extremely well. They provide an excellent curriculum which covers all areas of learning and is firmly based in play and practical experience. Because of this children clearly enjoy their learning experiences, are eager to attend and play together well. The assessment of children's progress is rigorous and children's achievements are well recorded. Staff use this information and their knowledge of children's individual interests to plan a starting point for activities on a weekly basis. Children follow their own interests and staff build on this, allowing each child to take the lead role in their learning. Teaching is consistently inspiring and challenging for all children and staff ensure children are continually making progress, thriving and responding to challenges in an exciting and vibrant learning environment.

Children have very good communication skills. They enjoy conversations with each other and with staff and are confident speaking in small groups. A number of children with language delay and who speak English as a second language attend the setting and staff provide these children with excellent support. Children enjoy listening to stories, they ask questions, think about what may happen next and clearly enjoy story times. Children have many opportunities to draw, paint and make marks in a variety of activities. Some children are able to recognise their name and copy familiar letters and many are beginning to understand that print carries meaning.

Children are able to explore numbers and counting in a variety of practical activities, such as how many children can fit on the bench in the park. Staff routinely use mathematical language and help children to understand simple ideas to enable them to understand concepts such as bigger, taller, more and less and are able to describe things by position, size and shape. Children enjoy investigating new activities and materials in their environment. Children explore textures in trays, such as shaving foam, chocolate powder and lentils. They enthusiastically play with green play dough, explaining how soft and sticky it is, exploring with tools such as cutters and rollers to make shapes. Children are confident with everyday technology and enjoy learning how to use the computer. The outdoor area is used extremely well and staff ensure that children have exciting and challenging opportunities for physical activity in the garden and on walks in the local community.

Children express themselves creatively using a variety of media and materials. They paint freely throughout the day and are proud of their art work which is attractively displayed around the centre. They spend time creating games and acting out in the home corner as they cook, feed and dress the dolls before wrapping them warmly to put them to bed in the prams and baskets.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children flourish in this children's centre because they are exceptionally well supported by staff who encourage them to become competent learners. Children enjoy many cuddles from staff;

as a result they become self assured, developing high levels of independence and a sense of security and belonging. They take on additional responsibilities within the provision, such as helping themselves to water and preparing and serving meals and snacks. Behaviour is exceptional and children show high levels of independence, confidence and self-esteem as staff continually praise and value their achievements. Children gain an extremely well developed respect for themselves and others as they are taken out to learn about their local community and the wider world. Children play extremely well together, learning to share and take turns, and negotiate this with confidence. They show genuine concern for one another and benefit enormously from the integrated outdoor learning environment. Children explore in an engaging learning environment and their ideas and initiative are valued by staff. They make a strong contribution to their environment and community, for example, planting seeds for the garden and their families taking part in the family open day. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff ensure they provide an inclusive and harmonious setting where everyone feels welcome and valued. Children's self-esteem is high because staff respect and value every child. Staff know about each child's family background and they encourage families to share festivals and celebrations so children learn about each other's culture and traditions. Children with complex and profound learning difficulties and disabilities are integrated, settled and receive excellent care within the children's centre. As a result, they are making very good progress. This is because of the detailed assessments and effective one to one teaching from sensitive staff who work sensitively with parents and with a range of other professionals to ensure that children have an individual plan in place. All professionals working with individual children and their families makes sure that children's key workers understand the plans and provide regular feedback to parents.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Children benefit from staff's superb partnership with parents. This ensures their individual needs are met and enables them to make rapid progress in their development. Parents are fully involved in their child's learning and how they can support this in the home because highly effective communication takes place, for example through key worker meetings. Children benefit greatly from the support and training given to their parents as effective learning and positive experiences increase at home, some of which focuses on parenting issues such as health and nutrition. The excellent multi-way partnerships between parents, centre staff, trainers and other professionals ensures that children's all-round health and well-being is promoted. Successful learning, especially for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, is enhanced through the good and growing links with other settings, helping children's smooth transition through their education.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in a well organized, inclusive children's centre which offers a challenging and accessible environment that promotes their learning and development. A comprehensive set of policies and procedures which are regularly reviewed and updated underpins the work at the centre, providing staff with a comprehensive reference tool. Documentation is maintained to a good standard although there are inconsistencies with the recording of medication records in the out of school club. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

All staff working in the children's centre have an in-depth understanding of child development and those working with funded children have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage

curriculum. High priority is placed on evaluating teaching, the effectiveness of the curriculum and the impact this has on children's individual progress across the whole provision, ensuring effective and continual learning takes place. Staff performance is monitored and assessed both formally and informally and ongoing training identified to further enhance the expertise of practitioners and the rich experiences offered to children. All the staff, including the many professionals attached to the centre, work cohesively as a team to meet the needs of the children and their families.

Leadership and management are outstanding. There is a clear, well-defined management structure in place. The centre manager has a clear vision for the centre. She motivates and enthuses staff with her passion for the centre, the children and the families that use it. The Senior Management Team have led and managed significant changes in the organisation of the children's centre as well as setting realistic goals and challenges for the future. Leaders know the staff, children, families and the centre well. They are constantly seeking ways to improve its effectiveness. The chair of governors is experienced and knowledgeable about education and child development as well as the needs of the local community. She leads the governing board and Senior Management Team competently in encouraging and challenging the centre. The centre's development plan shows where and how further developments are to be made and excellent systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of any changes in order to ensure maximum benefits to children are received.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a recommendation was made to ensure parents have easy access to the complaints and child protection procedures for the centre. Parents receive an informative welcome pack when they register their child with the setting. This includes details of the required policies and procedures, including complaints, and staff commitment to safeguarding children's welfare. In addition posters are displayed around the centre informing staff of the details of the regulatory body. As a result parents are fully informed of the information necessary to enable them to make an informed decision of the care they require and what to do if they have concerns.

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

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 outstanding.

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):

- ensure medication records in the holiday club are accurately recorded.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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