

University of Sheffield Union of Students Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Inspector | Karen Cockings |
| Setting address | 93 Brunswick Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S10 2FL |
| Telephone number | 0114 2739361 |
| Email | nursery@sheffield.ac.uk |
| Type of setting | Childcare on non-domestic premises |

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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*.

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Description of the setting

The University of Sheffield Student Union Nursery was registered in 1976. It operates from a detached, converted house with an annexe in the Broomhall area of Sheffield, within walking distance of the universities, hospitals and city centre. There are seven rooms available for the younger children on the ground and first floors of the main building, with a soft play area in the basement. The single storey annexe in the grounds has one main play room with three adjoining smaller rooms, and is used for the pre-school children. All share an enclosed outdoor play space. The nursery provides a service for university staff and students, members of the Union staff and the wider community. It is open every weekday, except for bank holidays and university closure days, between 8.15am and 6pm.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 64 children in the early years age range. There are currently 96 children on roll, aged from 6 months to under 5 years. The setting supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 25 members of staff, of whom all except one hold early years qualifications to at least a level 2. One member of staff has achieved Early Years Professional Status and two are working towards this. The setting has been awarded a 'Gold' standard for its participation in 'Pathways to Quality', a local quality assurance scheme. It receives support from the local authority and provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure, stimulating and inclusive environment, where they make good progress in their learning, supported by skilled and enthusiastic practitioners. Excellent relationships are established with parents, whose contributions are valued, and the nursery is committed to working in partnership with other agencies and settings. Most documentation to support the safety and well-being of children is maintained well. There is a firm commitment to the maintenance of continuous improvement through training and the promotion of reflective practice.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- review documentation to ensure that information about parental responsibility is gathered and recorded
- consider further ways of enhancing role play areas to develop children's use of their imaginations and to incorporate other areas of their learning
- continue to consolidate systems for evaluating practice, in order to build on

the nursery's strengths and to target areas for further improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's welfare is safeguarded effectively because staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to child protection issues. They are well supported by experienced managers, who are confident to take action should there be any concerns. Training in this area is given priority, which means that knowledge and skills are continually updated. Rigorous recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and are properly supported. From a broader safety perspective, effective measures are taken around the nursery to maintain a safe environment for children and to reinforce security issues to parents. A designated health and safety officer oversees practice, attending relevant training and passing on new information to colleagues. Daily checking and risk assessment systems are thorough and reviewed as necessary to address any unforeseen hazards. Importantly, children learn how to use their environment and equipment safely as they play. For example, they learn to hold the handrail as they use the stairs and to walk carefully around the nursery, especially if there are any wet or slippery areas. Required records are maintained well overall, although information about who has parental responsibility for children has not been clearly incorporated into registration forms.

Staff liaise very closely with parents, building excellent and supportive partnerships with them, which helps them to meet children's individual needs successfully. Parents are extremely positive in their comments about the nursery. They refer in particular to the stability of the staff team, their warm and caring approach and the effective sharing of information. The ongoing dialogue with parents is supplemented by daily record sheets for the younger children and by the regular sharing of children's development records. 'Celebration weeks' are organised, providing opportunities for parents to talk in detail with their child's key worker about the progress their children are making. Parents are involved as much as possible in their children's learning. For example, their own observations of children's home experiences are included in children's records. They are invited to share skills and expertise with children, such as playing a musical instrument for them, helping with gardening projects or teaching children a rhyme in their home language. Parents' feedback is sought and some become representatives on the nursery committee. Attractive photographic displays give parents a good insight into the range of activities offered and what their children are learning as a result of these experiences.

Staff also establish good links with other professionals involved in children's care, working closely, for example, with portage workers and special educational needs teachers, to support any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The nursery serves families from a wide catchment area, which means that children may go on to attend a number of different schools. It is, therefore, difficult to build partnerships with these other settings, although staff take positive steps to support transitions and to promote continuity of care and learning. The

nursery provides a welcoming and inclusive environment, where children's individuality is valued and staff celebrate the rich diversity of their nursery community. For example, they invite parents to share their home language and traditions with children, they provide multi-cultural resources and attend training to help them overcome any communication and language barriers. The nursery has identified the translation of some of their materials as an area they wish to develop in the future.

There is a clear commitment to the continuous improvement of the provision. Previous recommendations have been effectively addressed, resulting in improvements to hygiene practice and further development of outdoor play experiences for children. The staff team includes well qualified, caring and experienced practitioners, who sensitively evaluate their practice and are committed to their own professional development. Action plans for the nursery are discussed and there is a good understanding of the nursery's strengths and areas they wish to develop, although systems for recording these processes are not yet firmly established. Staff are well deployed and effectively supported by managers and senior practitioners, who have specific time allocated for the sharing of expertise. Access to well planned training opportunities, including a number of team training events throughout the year, considerably enhance outcomes for children.

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

Children arrive happily and quickly settle into the welcoming environment, where staff interact warmly with them and give sensitive reassurance to children who are new to the setting. For example, they cuddle and talk gently to babies, seeking ways to capture their interest and to calm them if they are initially a little upset on arrival. Tranquil music also helps to soothe and comfort them. Staff spend time with parents finding out about children's individual needs and routines, which helps them to provide consistent care. Children build trusting relationships with the adults who care for them and become confident to approach them for help if needed. They learn to play cooperatively together as they move through the nursery and take part in activities together. For example, to encourage fair turn-taking on the computer in the pre-school, staff bring out a large egg timer which helps children to manage turns by themselves. Children hear positive comments about their achievements, such as how carefully they are handling the books and about their good listening, which builds self-esteem and reinforces positive behaviour. Older children have developed their own 'rules' and made pictures about them as reminders to others.

Children in all areas access a varied range of interesting resources and activities to promote their learning. The younger children particularly enjoy sensory experiences and exploratory play. They show delight and wonder as they handle the snow brought in on a tray for them, and they love to make 'waves' with soft drapes and fabrics. Staff notice how children trace patterns with their fingers in the condensation on the window and enjoy listening to music. A good range of chunky brushes are available for painting activities and there are many natural materials

around the nursery for children to investigate. Resources both inside and outside the nursery are used very well overall, although at times role play areas lack excitement and are not always used to their full potential.

Staff interact with children in a lively way, which nurtures their growing language skills. Group times, such as snack and circle times, are used well to encourage children to talk about themselves and to recall earlier experiences. For example, they talk about the vegetables they grew in the garden during the summer and about how they could make an igloo. Staff are responsive to children, following their lead successfully to stimulate further learning. For example, while a group of children are playing with the toy animals a child asks for the story of the 'Three little pigs'. The adult readily responds and begins to tell the story, while encouraging the children to think about what could be the wolf and to check that they have enough pigs. Number and problem solving are brought into everyday activities and routines, such as counting the number of pips in their orange and talking about how many more they need to make five. Skilful questioning encourages children to think about what they could do to help them to grow into new plants. Their knowledge and understanding of the world around them is nurtured through discussion, practical experiences, and outings in their local community, such as visits to the Botanical Gardens and to the museum.

Children make good progress in their learning and development because they are well supported by knowledgeable practitioners, who carefully evaluate what they do, in order to enhance children's experiences. They conduct sensitive observations of children as they play, both spontaneous and more focused, to help them to identify children's interests and to inform their planning. They take part in projects with other early years professionals, which enables them to review and develop their own planning and recording systems. Children's records are attractively presented and shared effectively with parents.

Children's health, safety and well-being are given high priority at the nursery. Outdoor and indoor spaces are used very well to promote active play and to provide challenges. For example, children have great fun as they build a snowman and work together to make ice bricks for their igloo. A new rope ladder has helped to develop children's confidence and agility and they take part in gardening activities during the summer. For much of the day, free flow is possible for the older children between indoor and outdoor areas. The soft play area in the basement is also used well, enabling children to climb, balance and to move their bodies in different ways. Children's good health is further promoted through the provision of healthy snacks and meals, which include a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Staff are vigilant about special dietary requirements, using effective systems to ensure that children eat foods that are appropriate for them. Additional staff are employed at meal times and for cleaning, which enables staff to focus on the children. Positive steps are taken to protect children from the spread of infection and to teach them from an early age about the importance of good hygiene practice.

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

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| How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | 2 |
| The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement | 2 |

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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| How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships | 2 |
| 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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| The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning | 2 |
| The extent to which children feel safe | 2 |
| The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which children make a positive contribution | 2 |
| The extent to which children develop skills for the future | 2 |

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