



Office for Standards  
in Education

## NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 141798

DfES Number: 513670

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 01/03/2004  
Inspector Name Patricia Joan Latham

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care  
Setting Name Open University Children's Centre  
Setting Address Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
Buckinghamshire  
MK7 6AA

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Open University Children's Centre mk12 f  
278304

### ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Open University Children's Centre  
Address Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
Buckinghamshire  
MK7 6AA

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

### Information about the setting

The Open University Children's Centre has been registered since 1978 and is situated in a single storey premises within the grounds of the university at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes. It takes mainly children of parents working at the open university although if spaces are available it will offer them to non-university parents. The nursery is run and managed by a voluntary parents committee and is open Monday to Friday 08:30 till 18:00 for 50 weeks of the year. The nursery is registered for full day care and takes from babies to children of five years. The older children occupy their own rooms known as the 'top end' and presently there are 27 children on roll who are three and four years of age. The nursery is able to take nursery education funding and at present 17 three year olds and 3 four year olds are in receipt of funding. Currently there are no children attending who has a stated educational need or with English as an additional language.

The nursery manager also oversees the educational provision and holds a teaching qualification. There are three other staff members working with the older children who have a range of qualifications and experience. There is a designated special educational needs co-ordinator within the nursery.

## INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

### How effective is the nursery education?

The Open University Children's Centre educational provision is acceptable and of good quality. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. They are making generally good progress in communication, language and literacy and very good progress in all other areas.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff have an understanding of early learning goals and plan the curriculum to cover all areas of learning. Some do not have a sound knowledge of foundation stepping stone stages and limited opportunities are offered to develop and practise skills in some areas of literacy. Practical activities are linked into interesting themes and staff question children effectively to promote learning. Staff extend activities according to children's needs and offer either appropriate support or challenge as required. Staff manage children's behaviour well, offering clear guidelines and acting as good role models. Good use is made of available resources and staff use individual activities to promote learning in several areas. Regular observations are made to assess children's learning but are not linked into stepping stone stages to clearly indicate children's progress and highlight gaps in children's learning.

Leadership and management is generally good. There is a clear operational plan with delegated staff roles. Activities are managed well and have clear learning intentions. The present assessment of the overall programme and individual activities does not clearly evaluate if children are being offered a balance of activities in all areas of learning. As the programme is not linked into stepping stone stages it is difficult for staff to identify gaps.

Partnership with parents is generally good. Staff are available to discuss children's progress and parents are encouraged to be involved with children's learning. Parents receive a leaving report but do not receive regular progress reports to enable them to support children's learning.

### What is being done well?

- Children's language skills are well developed. They are able to express their thoughts and ideas verbally and have confidence talking in group situations.
- Staff make good use of activities to promote children's learning in several areas. Children practise with magnets whilst 'catching' number cards after they have combined two numbers together.
- Children are well behaved and are making good relationships. They are sensitive to each other's needs and help each other to choose resources.
- Interesting topics are followed to promote learning. Opportunities are taken to increase children's knowledge of the world by taking them, for example, on a visit to the garden centre to choose seeds to plant.

**What needs to be improved?**

- evaluation of the programme to ensure balance of activities are offered especially in some aspects of literacy
- the recording of children's progress
- staff's knowledge of foundation stepping stone stages

**What has improved since the last inspection?**

General good progress has been made on the two key issues raised. Plans now cover all areas of learning and include learning outcomes. They are linked into early learning goals but not stepping stone stages and it is not easy to identify gaps in the provision. This forms part of an ongoing key issue. Staff make regular observations and update children's records termly. These do not indicate children's progress through stepping stone stages to enable staff to highlight individual needs and this has been carried forward as a key issue.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are developing self-confidence and personal independence They are motivated to learn and eagerly take part in activities. Children concentrate well both independently and in groups, sharing resources and supporting each other. They behave well and follow instructions for games making sure each other have equal turns.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are developing a wide vocabulary and are able to communicate well. They enjoy listening to and retelling stories and take home a reading book each week if they wish. They have an understanding that words carry meaning and can recognise their own name. They have opportunity to practise writing skills but limited activities are planned to enable them to recognise the sound or shape of letters or practise letter formation.

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are confident in counting and recognising numbers and staff use practical activities to reinforce learning. Children measure the amount of compost in pots when planting seeds and calculate how many fingers are needed to paint three spots. They are able to recognise shape and recreate patterns and are developing their mathematical language, talking about the enormous turnip.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Activities are linked into interesting themes. When discussing seasons they plant seeds and beans and go on nature walks. Children examine and investigate objects, seeing how magnets work and observing the weather. They use a range of technological equipment to aid their learning including magnifiers and a computer., They build and design using a range of material making masks and a volcano. Children learn about their own and other cultures through activities linked to cultural festivals.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are gaining increasing control of their bodies, climbing, balancing and getting an understanding of space around them. Frequent use is made of the outside play area and children have a regular gym session. They use a range of small and large equipment, and tools, with increasing control and skill. Children are gaining knowledge of how their bodies keep healthy through topics on 'my body'.

**CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children are able to explore a wide range of differing mediums to express themselves creatively, including the use of clay, paint and collage. They explore colour and texture and extend their imagination through role play and music. Children enjoy re-enacting stories such as the enormous turnip and know a range of songs and rhymes. Activities are planned to develop full use of all senses, tasting food, listening to sounds and playing musical instruments.

**Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.**

## **OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION**

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

## **WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES**

- Increase staff's knowledge of the foundation stepping stone stages to enable them to plan effectively and progress children's learning in free play activities.
- Extend present evaluation of the programme offered to ensure that a balance of activities are provided to give learning opportunities across all areas of learning especially in literacy.
- Continue to improve the observation and assessment of children, linking these into the foundation stepping stone stages, in order to clearly identify progress.

*The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.*