

Places for Children

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY278043
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Setting Address	1-3 Altham Gardens, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD19 6HJ
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Registered person	Places For Children
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?

Places for Children Day Nursery opened in 2004 and operates from a purpose built building in Watford, Hertfordshire. They are part of a large chain of nursery provisions, they are a non-profit making organisation offering affordable childcare places for working parents. The group have access to three base rooms, a kitchen, utility areas, a laundry, staff room and toilets. All children have shared access to a secure, enclosed outside area. A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year.

There are currently 85 children aged from seven months to under five years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for early education and six children receive pathfinder funding. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 20 staff, this includes a catering manager and bank staff who cover for holidays and staff sickness. Of these, 16 staff, including the manager hold appropriate early

years qualifications and two staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery receive support from a qualified teacher and the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning about the importance of healthy living as they eat balanced and nutritious foods and take part in daily exercise which forms part of their routine. They enjoy eating a healthy tuna pasta bake with a variety of vegetables for lunch. They are keen to discuss their favourite vegetables and demonstrate their understanding of how some foods such as carrots promotes our good eyesight. Children enthusiastically brush their teeth after lunch discussing why this is important especially as the tooth fairy only likes to collect strong clean teeth. Their understanding of good oral hygiene is further supported through topic work which has looked at the role of the dentist. Younger babies nutritional needs are fully met as their formula milk is provided and prepared by the nursery staff. Babies who are ready to be weaned onto solid foods have their meals pureed. No new foods are introduced without prior consultation with parents, this ensures that staff do not give children food that they may be allergic to. Children with allergies or special dietary requirements have their needs met as staff work in close partnership with parents to ensure that they are appropriately cared for.

Children are developing a positive attitude towards personal hygiene as they wash their hands independently before snack time and after participating in messy play activities. However, at lunch time some children share flannels to clean their faces after they have eaten and they are not reminded of the importance of covering their mouths when they cough. Therefore, children may be at risk of catching infections. They are aware of the importance of putting on their indoor shoes when they come in from playing outside in the garden. The nursery as a whole is very clean and well maintained, there are good policies and procedures in place to safeguard children when they are ill or are injured at nursery. Children are further protected as the majority of staff hold a current paediatric first aid certificate. Staff maintain appropriate documentation to share with parents.

Children have good opportunities to enjoy physical activity and to rest according to their needs. Babies enjoy developing their coordination as they confidently climb on apparatus in their base room. Equipment is perfect for their age and stage of development. They sleep soundly in small cots with their own clean bed linen. Babies are comforted as they go to sleep as staff rub their backs until they are settled. They are monitored every ten minutes whilst they are sleeping to check that they are safe.

Older children are very excited to access the garden area. They climb apparatus in the garden with increasing skill and coordination. They enthusiastically participate in parachute games and are keen to show off their balancing skills as they walk across long beams. Children develop good muscles as they ride bicycles, scooters and build with large bricks. Their finer manipulative skills are developed as they use chinks and small paint brushes in the garden. Children enjoy creating chalk pictures to represent fireworks for bonfire night. They are keen to do 'magic painting' with water and paint brushes which are used all over the garden area. Children's access to fresh air is seen as a key to keeping them healthy, thus children enjoy many hours in the garden. They also have their snacks in this area and on occasions their lunch. Older children tend not to sleep during the day, however, there is provision for them to rest comfortably if

they feel tired. All toddlers have their own sleep mats, bed linen and comforters brought in from home to aid their restful sleep.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment. There are good procedures to ensure that children are protected from risks as the staff continually assess the environment and resources that children access. All staff take responsibility for keeping the environment clean and for reporting any safety concerns, hence children's safety is given high priority. Children access a broad range of good quality resources. Babies have excellent equipment to support their early independence. They sit on small chairs at low-level tables where they can fully participate in creative activities as well as to eat in comfort. Older children are developing competent independent skills as they utilise appropriate child-sized bathrooms where they can take care of their own personal needs with ease. They handle appropriate child-sized cutlery and enjoy the responsibility of serving their own lunches.

Children learn to keep themselves safe as they climb up and down the stairs carefully when they are moving around the nursery. In the garden they are aware of the need to take care as they climb apparatus and use balancing beams with caution. Children are kept safe on outings as high staff ratios are maintained. All parents emergency contact details are taken out on trips. Staff take a portable first aid kit should a child or member of staff require medical attention. Children are involved in regular emergency evacuation drills which are monitored to ensure that they are effective. Accident records are assessed to identify any patterns of injuries or areas of the nursery which are causing particular concern, this information is then used to implement any further safety practices where possible. Children's understanding of staying safe is further promoted as they experience visits from the local fire and police departments, which in turn supports children's ongoing topic work.

Children's welfare is protected as staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures. All staff have induction training in this area and are aware that there is a designated member of staff in place to deal with any concerns. There are comprehensive policies and procedures to guide and support staff should they need to make a referral to outside professionals. All staff undergo stringent vetting procedures to assess their suitability to work with children. Required documentation and practices to support and maintain children's safety are in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are on the whole settled and happy within the nursery. Babies enjoy their time as they play freely in an environment that is fully accessible to them. They are learning to move and develop personal independence as they reach small sinks to wash their hands and to generally play with water. They are intrigued to explore treasure baskets with a variety of natural materials. This fully supports their exploration and learning through their senses as they touch, observe and taste objects. Their individual needs are met as staff maintain daily diaries for each of their key children. This keeps parents informed about their babies individual sleep, eating and toileting habits along with information about what they have been doing during the day. Planning for all young children in the nursery gives due regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework,

thus ensuring that they are provided with appropriate experiences that will support their early learning and development.

Older children are gaining confidence and self-esteem as they take responsibility for setting up the tables for snack time. They are keen to demonstrate their skills as they put out all the names of the children present on the tables. Helpers are also keen to remind their peers that their snack is ready for them. All children use their own initiative as they move confidently within their environment and access resources of their choice during free-play sessions. Children have established secure relationships with their carers. This is evident when toddlers are tired and seek staff for comfort. They clearly enjoy the cuddles and attention they receive. Babies enjoy the consistent praise they receive when they are playing with soft animal masks. They are delighted to be told how wonderful they look. Older children particularly enjoy lunch times which is a fairly relaxed occasion where staff sit and eat with them. They are developing positive relationships with their peers as they learn how to share and take turns when playing. They work cooperatively to build large constructions with bricks. Children demonstrate their understanding of good codes of behaviour as they take turns to speak at circle time and learn to listen to others.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They organise a fully accessible learning environment for children which is clearly based around the six areas of learning. Good use is made of the outside environment where more traditional inside resources are taken outside. Thus children are very keen to do puzzles, painting and building with bricks in the garden. They also enjoy having their snack outside and occasionally lunch. This is made possible as there is a large covered area which enables children to access the garden in all weathers. Children have a good balance of adult-led activities alongside the opportunities to engage in self-chosen play. Staff plan an exciting and broad range of activities and experiences to extend children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. Children's individual starting points are assessed through regular written observations, this information is effectively used in planning for future learning.

Staff make good use of their time as they are actively involved with children throughout the day. They use daily routines well to promote children's learning, for example, as they encourage problem solving when laying tables for lunch or when they encourage awareness of staying healthy as they instigate a conversation about healthy foods. There are a broad range of attractive resources for children which they are able to explore and use independently. Children enjoy working with home-made resources such as puzzles and books, many of which have familiar photographs of themselves and their peers.

Children are learning good self-care skills as they help themselves to lunch. They competently use cutlery to serve their own portions of food and confidently ask for more when they have finished. They pour their own drinks and scrape their plates clean after lunch. Children clearly enjoy this responsibility and there is no rush for them to finish quickly. This is a relaxed social occasion where they chat happily to each other and staff. Children's communication and language skills are given due emphasis as they are consistently encouraged to express themselves. They confidently speak out in circle time, clearly enjoying sharing their news with their peers. Children are developing good listening skills as they are reminded of the importance of listening to others and sharing in what everyone has to say. There is lots of animated discussions as children talk about their experiences of bonfire night and what they enjoyed the most. Staff allow

children to speak freely and only intervene to remind them to take it in turns to speak and listen. Children are learning about letter sounds and demonstrate their early reading skills as they self-register for snack time. However, the environment has minimal displays of letters or print, particularly in the mark-making area. Therefore children are not fully supported to develop their understanding of the meaning of print and letters in their environment.

Children are developing an interest in numbers as they use their skills in everyday routines. They confidently count how many children are present today and then how many staff. They then calculate how many people there is altogether. Children are excited to build tall towers with bricks and observe that this is taller than themselves. They demonstrate their skills in matching shapes as they competently complete challenging puzzles. They are able to observe and label shapes correctly such as circles, squares and triangles as they practise drawing these with the aid of stencils. However, children do not have enough opportunities to observe written numerals in their environment. This does not fully support their early recognition of numbers and how these are used all around us. Children show a keen interest in the world and how things work as they use programmable toys. They learn how trains move on the track as they look carefully at the wheels as they fit these onto the track they have made. Children are excited to access the computer and demonstrate their developing mouse control. They have good opportunities to build with construction resources both inside and out in the garden. Children become aware of wider society as they have visits from the police and firefighters. They learn about a variety of cultures and traditions through ongoing topic work.

Children have good opportunities to be creative and develop their imagination as they have independent access to a well-resourced imaginative play area, this is currently a garden centre. They enjoy exploring paint with their hands as they decide it is much more fun to paint with your fingers than a brush. Children are very keen to demonstrate their artistic skills as they show off their art work in their folders. They recently made three dimensional butterflies some of which hang from the ceilings in the nursery. Children use a variety of tools and equipment to develop good motor skills and coordination. For example, they regularly use scissors, paint brushes and glue spreaders to create pictures and models. They confidently ride their bikes and scooters in the garden.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are cared for by staff who value working in partnership with parents. Their individual needs are the basis of the settling-in process that is undertaken within the nursery. Staff gather comprehensive information about children's personal needs, including their dietary or religious requirements and routines followed at home. This information is clearly used in the baby room where their needs are sensitively met as they go to sleep when they are tired and they are fed when they are hungry. However, this good practice is not consistently followed through for the toddlers (children aged 18 months to two years) as they are kept awake until after lunch. Some children are very tired by lunch time and do not eat well, hence their individual needs are not fully promoted.

Children feel a sense of belonging as they bring in their comforters from home and share family photographs which are displayed around the nursery. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support. Staff work with their parents and outside professionals to provide consistent care and appropriate learning opportunities to aid their progression. Children develop self-esteem and respect for others as they observe positive adult role models around them. They are learning how to share and take turns as they play games and work

cooperatively to build models with large bricks. Children show sensitivity to each other as they quickly run to the aid of a peer who has got hurt in the garden. The impact is that on the whole children generally work harmoniously together and those who find this difficult are supported appropriately to learn these good codes of conduct.

Children have good opportunities to make choices and take decisions about their play. They confidently take part in both adult-led activities and self-initiated play. The environment supports them to be independent as all equipment and resources are fully accessible to them. Children become aware of our wider society as they access a range of multi-cultural resources which positively promote diversity. Welcome posters in a variety of languages emphasises the importance of valuing languages from other countries. Children experience aspects of other cultures as they take part in the celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Eid. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Parents receive high quality information about the nursery, how it operates, its ethos and staffing and the educational programme followed. Parents are provided with a colourful prospectus which includes a CD Rom which gives them an insight into the routines and experiences that their children will engage in when they attend. There is good emphasis on children learning through their play and how this is achieved through following the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children's progress and achievements are shared with parents regularly and more formally when they are invited to attend open evenings. Parents can make suggestions about any aspect of the provision through posting comments in the suggestion box which is available in their designated area of the nursery. Parents are well informed about schemes of work as they receive regular news letters to keep them posted on current topics. Information is broken down under each area of learning which clearly sets out how they are going to develop children's understanding in these areas. Positive feedback through parental questionnaires demonstrates that parents are very happy with the care and education their children receive.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery is effectively managed. Children's well-being is seen as paramount as comprehensive recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that they are well protected. They are cared for by a well-qualified and experienced team of staff. All staff have a thorough three month induction process where they receive training in health and safety and child protection. Regular individual supervision and whole team meetings ensure that good practice issues are discussed and then implemented where possible. Children are cared for by a friendly staff team who are clearly interested in them and in how they can support them to reach their potential. Staff are motivated in their roles and feel valued by the organisation. They have good opportunities to develop their own skills and express how they would like to move forward with their career. This benefits the children as they receive continuity of care from a consistent staff team as staff turnover in the nursery is minimal. Effective staff deployment and good ratios of adults to children, supports the generally smooth running of the nursery.

The nursery has a comprehensive operational plan that is available to all staff and parents. All necessary documentation for the safe and efficient management of the setting is in place and record keeping systems are used well to meet children's needs. An established key-worker system ensures that every child has a designated adult who is responsible for their general well-being and for liaising with their parents.

The leadership and management of early education is good. Managers have high expectations of their staff team as they strive to improve the quality of children's learning opportunities through continuous self-evaluation. All staff are involved in this process as they are encouraged to move around the nursery to gain experience in all areas. Part of this process involves them completing confidential feedback forms to express how they found this experience and to record not only good practice issues observed but also to highlight areas for improvement. Information is then utilised to develop good practice in the nursery. The staff team meet regularly to discuss, evaluate and reflect on their work so that improvements can be discussed and implemented. Professional development for all staff is given high priority, they attend regular training courses both individually and as a team.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provision were asked to develop their policies to ensure that these included the requirement to notify Ofsted of all significant incidents. All documentation and policies have been reviewed, these give due regard to notifying Ofsted of all necessary incidents. Therefore improvement is good and has a positive impact on outcomes for children.

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 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):

- ensure consistent good hygiene practices are in place to prevent the spread of infection
- ensure that all children receive equal concern with regards to their need to rest when they are tired

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):

- develop children's opportunities to observe letters and print within their environment
- develop further children's awareness of numbers through visual aids and good labelling in their environment.

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