

St Christopher's Community Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	100587
Inspection date	02 October 2007
Inspector	Chris Banks
Setting Address	4th Floor, St Christopher Flats, Bridgeway Street, London, NW1 1QR
Telephone number	020 7388 5545
E-mail	
Registered person	Somers Town Community Association
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?

St. Christopher's Community Nursery for children aged between two and five years was registered in 1997. It is organised and managed by Somers Town Community Association and operates from premises in the NW1 area of Camden. The day care provision is open 48 weeks of the year between 09:00 and 17:00. Children attend a variety of sessions. The nursery supports children who speak English as an additional language.

There are currently 13 children on roll. Of these, six receive a nursery education grant. The setting is registered to care for a maximum of 20 children at any one time.

A staff team of three work directly with the children, all of whom hold recognised qualifications in early years childcare. Local authority advisory teachers provide additional support.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in very clean and welcoming surroundings. They are well protected from the risk of infection because staff follow clear written procedures and also carry out effective hygiene practice. Nappy changing arrangements are well managed and older children are learning good self care skills. They understand when and why they need to wash their hands and also learn good hygiene practice as part of daily routines. Children's privacy is respected when they use bathroom facilities and toilet training is sensitively supported by staff.

Prompt action is taken if a child becomes ill in the care of the nursery. Staff also take effective precautions to ensure they do not return until they are completely well. Parents are provided with clear written guidance about exclusion times for particular contagious illnesses and staff often keep in touch with parents to check on children's progress. Arrangements for the administration of medication are now well managed. All staff hold a valid first aid qualification which means they are prepared in the event of an accident or emergency.

Children enjoy very nutritious meals and snacks because staff positively promote healthy eating. Menus are well planned in advance and developed in close consultation with parents. Effective partnership working with health professionals also helps ensure the needs of children with special dietary requirements are met.

Children experience a wide variety of foods which includes meat, fish, pulses, pasta and vegetarian alternatives. They actively take part in setting tables and enjoy the warm sociable atmosphere at mealtimes. Children happily help themselves to snacks and water throughout the day which they prepare for themselves as part of the overall programme of activities, children are also encouraged to explore the sources of some foods. A few children are already quite well informed about the positive effects of a healthy diet.

Outdoor play and physical exercise forms an integral part of children's daily routines. Children can freely access the reasonably well equipped playground where they enjoy opportunities to develop their coordination and balancing skills. They explore the space with confidence and also enjoy weekly visits to the soft adventure play adventure room at the local community centre.

Children have many good opportunities to practise their fine motor skills. They confidently fit small pieces of construction kits together, manipulate controls on CD players and skilfully use scissors, brushes, pencils and crayons. They are also positively encouraged to learn how to use cutlery at meal times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in safe surroundings and are well supervised. Premises are well secured and all unknown visitors are asked to prove their identity and sign a visitors book. The arrival and departure of children is also closely monitored and the good practice of reminding parents to sign out children further protects their safety. There is also now a written procedure for staff to follow if a child is uncollected for any reason.

Children are able to explore in comfort and safety because staff take good practical precautions to protect them. There is a well developed system in place for assessing potential safety risks and action is taken promptly if any are identified. Daily checklists are completed and safety arrangements are regularly reviewed. Children are also encouraged to consider the safety of themselves and others during their general play activities and behave in a considerate way. Outings are planned with care and staff describe good road safety practice. In the unlikely event that a child becomes separated from the group, there is now a clear procedure for staff to follow.

The overall welfare of children is positively protected because key staff are knowledgeable about their role and responsibility in child protection. They are familiar with the process of monitoring, recording and reporting concerns and use up to date written guidance. The procedure for dealing with any allegations made against staff is also clearly outlined and the role of Ofsted is included. The role of staff in protecting the welfare of children is, however, not shared with parents.

Children enjoy using an extensive range of safe, well maintained toys and equipment appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Very well organised space with lots of low level storage enables them to freely help themselves.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children look forward to their day at nursery because they receive a very warm welcome from staff. Space is very well prepared in advance of their arrival which means children are able to settle quickly into their chosen activities. New, less confident children are being gently introduced and already show signs that they are very comfortable and secure with their key worker and other children. Details of each child's routine and activities are recorded and shared with parents which also assists with the settling in process.

The close and affectionate relationship between staff and all children is apparent. Children are cuddled and comforted as they are gently woken from their afternoon nap and before they eagerly rejoin activities, some are encouraged to help fold and tidy bed linen.

Children benefit from the good listening and communication skills of staff who are patient, kind and attentive. They confidently approach staff for support, secure in the knowledge they will receive a warm response. Regular children are comfortable and familiar with their daily routines and co operate well.

Younger children benefit from staff's good understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and their progress is well monitored. Staff keep clear, detailed observations and effectively plan a stimulating range of activities to support children's development. Themes and topics are well thought out by staff and children enjoy exploring the neighbourhood as part of extending their understanding of living in a densely populated inner city area.

During activities, staff interact well with children and the overall atmosphere is relaxed, calm and purposeful. Spontaneous free play is greatly enjoyed by children who make full use of the quite well equipped outdoor play area. Children benefit from being able to self select from an extensive range of good quality resources. Everything is stored at child height and is attractively displayed.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Key staff are well trained and demonstrate a good understanding of the Foundation Stage. They plan and provide a stimulating and enjoyable range of activities which effectively covers each area of learning. This helps ensure children make good progress in reaching their early learning goals before they go to school. The overall progress of children is well monitored and staff have a good understanding of how they are developing. They record clear and succinct observations of children and effectively use these to plan for children's next steps.

Children play happily and comfortably alongside their peers and are learning to share and co operate with each other. They are developing good self help skills and demonstrate a growing confidence in their own abilities. Older children are able to collaborate on shared tasks. For example, they work well together as they help tidy up before lunch and busily clean tables setting each place with a beaker, plate and cutlery.

Children's general communication skills are developing well. This is because they are encouraged individually and in small groups to express themselves freely and openly. An additional range of techniques such as sign language and puppets are used to encourage children to communicate their feelings and a cosy corner provides children with a place to reflect. Older children understand when it is important to listen and concentrate. They are attentive during story and circle times but also enthusiastically join in action songs and rhymes which they know very well. Some are very creative in their interpretation of particular songs as staff accompany them on a guitar.

Children behave very well and are gradually learning to problem solve. They are positively encouraged to negotiate their way through minor conflicts and are learning about the importance of apologising if their behaviour upsets others. They are congratulated when they show a particular kindness and respond warmly to each other.

The outdoor area provides children with a good range of learning opportunities which enhances their knowledge and understanding of the natural world. Some enthusiastically explore the well tended small patio area as they check progress on their tomato plants and become extremely excited as they discover some are ready to be picked. A new 'wormery' also gives children a fascinating insight into insect lifecycles and introduces them to the concept of recycling.

Early writing skills are being well developed. There are plenty of opportunities for children to experiment with mark marking of all kinds and some older children confidently label their own work after a painting or drawing activity. Resources are of very good quality. Children's understanding of calculation is also well supported. Staff often use simple mathematical language as part of everyday activities and older children can now confidently count beyond 10 and can also do simple subtractions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Partnership with parents is good. Comprehensive information is gathered and recorded at the beginning of each placement and regular meetings with each child's key worker helps keep parents well informed about how they are settling in.

Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in their child's learning in a range of ways. They receive clear information about how the overall curriculum is planned and are subsequently kept well informed about their child's progress. Good quality portfolios track children's learning and development from when they join the nursery and contain photographs, examples of children's work and observations.

Children benefit from their parents' participation in different celebratory events at the nursery which are also effectively used to positively acknowledge a child's individuality. New children who speak English as an additional language benefit from the ongoing reassuring support of staff who learn key words of each child's home language and also effectively use British Sign Language as an additional means of communicating.

There are also effective systems in place to support children who may have additional needs because staff work closely with specialist outside agencies and have experience of supporting children with a wide range of abilities. A good selection of anti discriminatory toys and equipment in the nursery helps children acknowledge difference. This helps foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they learn more about the world around them.

The overall atmosphere of the nursery is relaxed, quiet and purposeful. This is because children are happily absorbed and feel secure and wanted. They play in a co operative and companionable way and are learning about sharing and being patient. Staff are good role models. They speak to children in a respectful, kind way and guide behaviour sensitively.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment by a well qualified and experienced staff team. They work well together and create a relaxed and happy atmosphere for children who clearly enjoy their time at nursery.

Leadership and management of the setting is good. There is a demonstrated commitment to continually improve the service for local children and families and an openness to considering new ways of working. A comprehensive action plan with clearly identified areas for improvement is in place and staff training is considered a priority.

Clear and comprehensive written policies and procedures relating to children's health and safety are effectively put into practice. All staff are fully checked for their suitability to work with children and there are contingency plans in place to ensure ratios are maintained in case of staff absence.

Space is sufficient for the number of children registered. The main playroom is very well organised with quiet comfortable areas for children to rest and relax. Creatively displayed examples of children's work celebrate their achievements and helps create a strong sense of ownership.

Documentation is well organised and there are suitable arrangements for the storage of confidential information. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, the provider was required to develop a lost and uncollected children's policy. There is now a clear written procedure for staff to follow. There was also a requirement made to ensure the medication procedure included a record of the exact dosage given to children. A revised procedure is now in place which includes this important detail.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to taken 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.

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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 parents are informed about the role and responsibility of staff in protecting the welfare of children

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):

- continue to develop systems for assessing children's progress and planning for their next steps

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