



## Gardners Lane Early Years Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101783
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 February 2007
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<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 outstanding. 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?

Gardners Lane Sure Start Children's Centre is attached to Gardners Lane Primary School, which is located in a residential area of Cheltenham. It is a phase 1 children's centre which serves the local community and wider community through its outreach work. The centre is funded and managed by Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Directorate. There are 86 children on roll. The centre operates during school terms for pre-school care and education, and during the school holidays for family play schemes and community family support. The centre offers a range of integrated services for families and children. These include crèche facilities, pre-nursery and nursery education, special needs support, training opportunities, advice, education and support for families, drop-in play sessions, developmental assessment, home-based support and family holiday play schemes.

The registration covers the Crèche, Froglets, Best Start groups, Nursery Groups and Full Day Care Nursery. These groups cater for children from birth to five years of age. An after-school club and holiday playscheme are planned for school-age children. All groups have their own base rooms with toilet and changing facilities but also have shared use of the dining room, soft play room, sensory room and outdoor areas. The Crèche offers care for children whilst their carers attend courses at the centre. The Best Start Group runs for two days each week and offers activities aimed at encouraging the personal, social and emotional development of the small group of children who attend. Froglets offers care for pre-nursery children whilst the Nursery offers pre-school education to children aged two years nine months to five years. Funded education places are available for children aged three and four years of age and at present there are 66 children in receipt of funding. Support is available for children with learning difficulties and disabilities and for children with English as an additional language.

The centre employs 35 staff. All key personnel hold early years teaching, learning support or social work qualifications at level three or above.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive because staff carefully consider how best to promote children's healthy well-being. They actively ensure that they meet all aspects of children's health, nutritional and physical needs. All areas of the children's centre are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and staff follow very effective procedures that promote good hygiene. Children gain an excellent understanding of the importance of good hygiene, from a very young age. Older children manage their personal care with confident independence. There are photographic prompts showing the sequence of hand-washing prominently displayed in the toilet areas serving as a reminder to children to wash their hands. Toddlers learn that it is important to wash their hands before eating. All children routinely wash their hands before they eat. Children gain an understanding of how germs can harm them. For example, a child playing with dry coloured rice puts his hands in his mouth and goes to handle the rice again. He is reminded about the risk of cross-infection and goes to wash his hands. Babies and young children's comfort is ensured by the prompt response from staff to change soiled nappies. Nappy changing procedures effectively minimise the risk of cross-infection. Staff wear aprons and disposable gloves, wipe down changing equipment thoroughly after each use and dispose of nappies hygienically. Babies and toddlers are happy to be changed, as staff make it an enjoyable experience giving undivided attention, talking to and babbling with the child and often singing to them. The baby care room within the full-day-care provision provides a well maintained play space for babies. Effective procedures maintain high levels of cleanliness. For example, staff remove their shoes whilst in here and routinely clean toys and resources, paying particular attention to toys that babies put in their mouths. The soft play room is industrially cleaned regularly.

Children are able to relax as they wish. There are comfortable areas within the centre, including a very relaxing sensory room. Babies follow their own sleep routines and sleep in the designated sleep room, off their play room. Staff monitor sleeping babies regularly to ensure their safety.

Children eat healthy nutritious meals and snacks. An experienced cook prepares meals with fresh produce. She introduces children to different types of food and ensures that the menu contains plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Menus are adapted to accommodate different dietary requirements. Different consistencies of food are provided for babies suited to their different stages of development. Children are also introduced to foods from around the world. For example, in celebration of Chinese New Year, young children explore and taste prawn crackers and lycees. Children also participate in cooking activities. There is a kitchenette within the baby room where staff store and prepare baby feeds and sterilizing equipment is available. Close liaison with parents ensures that staff are fully aware of the children's individual, dietary needs. Older children are able to grow and tend a range of crops and plants within their own site planting area and local allotment. They eagerly sample their produce. This means that children develop independence in making decisions towards a healthy lifestyle.

Children greatly enjoy a broad range of challenging physical play activities. Children of all ages have regular access to outdoor play, providing fresh air and exercise. Indoors, babies stretch and roll as they play on the floor mats. They pull themselves up and utilise furniture as support as they gain confidence in their walking skills. They have a low climbing structure with a slide to further aid their development. The soft play room offers opportunities for children of all ages to move in a variety of ways. For example, two and three-year-olds jump confidently into the ball pool, carry and build with soft blocks, climb and slide. They eagerly join an adult on a rocking soft play shape doing to and fro movements with rigour to rock it and giggling as together they tip it over and roll onto the soft matting. Three and four-year-olds move freely between the indoor and outdoor play environments. They are confident movers. All the year round, they eagerly respond to stimulating outdoor resources. For example, children pedal and propel wheeled toys at speed around the hard surfaced painted roadway, through a willow tunnel. They negotiate the space avoiding collision with others. They travel down sloped sections, gathering speed and controlling their vehicles safely. On suitable equipment they carry passengers and enjoy the experience together. Children run freely and are able to propel scooters with ease. The Gardner's Lane service station adds interest extending children's learning in a variety of ways. Children queue to use the petrol pump, pay the adults or 'station staff' counting out change; they buy a token to operate the car wash and move through it in turn. The pump and car wash being artistic creations made by children and staff. Children practise their climbing skills on the low climbing wall and can use the large outdoor play equipment shared with the school. This incorporates higher levels of climbing skills and balance and provides challenge for more able children.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

High priority is given to children's safety as staff ensure the premises are secure and access to the provision is closely monitored. Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised. This is because staff are extremely vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce any potential hazard on the premises and for outings. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to achieve a balance between freedom and setting safe limits, especially regarding children's outdoor play. They talk with children about keeping themselves safe and engage children in helping to maintain a safe play environment. All children join in tidying up and know where resources are

stored. Regular fire drills familiarise children with fire evacuation procedures. They also follow nursery rules to keep themselves safe. Visits from fire safety officers and the local community police officer help children to learn about fire safety and stranger danger. Staff also talk to children about water safety.

Children use an extensive range of high quality equipment that is appropriate to their age and stage of development. The resources are stimulating and engage children, fully supporting their all-round development. Each group within the centre, aged from under one year to school age are able to safely access resources for themselves. Storage facilities ensure that even the youngest children can select resources for themselves. For example, in the baby room there are sturdy low level storage containers with clear sides so that babies and toddlers can view the available toys. Those with special needs are safe and fully included because of the sensitive adult support and well planned adaptations to available resources and activities.

The staff give top priority to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare. All staff have excellent knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. They are fully aware of the key role they play in safeguarding children. Staff attend regular child protection training and have on-site support available from the community family support workers. They all know procedures to follow should they have any concerns.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the children's centre. They receive extremely good support from all of the centre's skilled staff. Each child is nurtured in their play and learning, enabling them to meet their full potential. Children of all ages are fully engaged in the exciting opportunities offered to them. They achieve well as staff are highly skilled and use their excellent understanding of early years frameworks, such as 'Birth to three matters', to provide high quality care and education.

Babies and young children are offered an impressive range of rich and stimulating opportunities to investigate and explore their environment. Staff interact playfully with the babies and young children. They are attentive to the children's creative explorations, providing assistance in a way that does not disrupt their flow of thinking. Through unobtrusive support children are given the emotional security to experiment. Babies investigate natural and man-made resources which they discover. They use their senses to investigate objects and materials. They enjoy tactile experiences of investigating shaving foam, shredded paper, water, paint, spaghetti and jelly. An example of such an experience is a baby clothed in a waterproof overall, sitting with a bowl of jelly. He tentatively pokes it with a bemused expression. Then he pinches a little between his thumb and forefinger, before squelching a hand into it. He uses a spoon to scoop it and manipulates it. He tastes it then repeats the process, squeezing the jelly through his fingers, now smiling as he enjoys the sensory experience. He sits happily engaged at the activity, by now with jelly stuck to his forehead and down his front and over the strategically covered floor; a member of staff at hand supporting his exploratory play. Babies and toddlers are taken into the sensory room where they can nestle into soft cushions, feel the texture of floaty silk scarves, explore lighting, hear soft music and handle strings of light.

Crèche children are often integrated into other day care or pre-school groups when numbers are low. They enjoy a full range of experiences while their parents attend training courses within the centre. They have their own base room where they assemble and they are familiar with the wide range of resources readily available here.

Children's early communication skills are extremely well supported through high quality, adult-child interactions within all groups. Makaton sign language is used to support children with hearing difficulties. Children are encouraged to babble and talk by the caring and highly knowledgeable adults who are very interested in what the children say and ask excellent questions to help them think.

### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are highly motivated because of the extremely good teaching from staff. They are interested in the extensive range of rich, varied and imaginative experiences offered. Staff make sure activities are planned to ensure all individual children are challenged in their development. They recognise the importance of giving children time to practise their newly acquired skills and to develop good levels of concentration and perseverance. Staff utilise every possible opportunity to promote children's learning. They instinctively ask children questions pitched at the right level so children are challenged to think, and they introduce children to mathematical ideas and offer problems to solve. They embrace ideas from children and build upon children's interests when planning. Skilful use of assessment by key workers and information sharing between staff, ensures that future plans build upon what children already know and can do. Individual education plans are used to support children with learning difficulties or disabilities and children with English as an additional language are supported well. The indoor and outdoor play environments are treated as one whole learning environment and children are able to move freely between the areas as they wish. Staff acknowledge that for some children the outdoor environment represents the best learning environment for them. Children's progress from the time of starting at the centre is excellent. Their progress across all areas of learning is outstanding.

Children have varying levels of speech when they start. They receive extremely high levels of support to develop their communication and listening skills. Some children speak very clearly and express themselves orally with confidence. They use language to share ideas, ask questions, talk through activities and recall past experiences. They often initiate conversation with their peers, staff and even unfamiliar adults. Children are introduced to new words to extend their vocabulary. At the end of each pre-school session children sit with their key carer and discuss what they have enjoyed during the session. Photographs of activities are used to support children in their recall. All children have the opportunity to share their thoughts. Children greatly enjoy books and join in enthusiastically with group stories. They talk about what they see in book illustrations and link stories to their own experiences. The attractive and cosy book area is well used and children often look at books for their own enjoyment. Children enjoy rhyming songs and stories and some are beginning to make the links between sounds and letters. Children see print used for different purposes. They see signs and labels indoors and outdoors. They can recognise their own names and have an ample supply of name stickers to put on their work. Some copy their names and others try to write their own names unaided.

Children can freely access writing materials and they also understand that a computer can also be used to produce written material. They use paint programmes to draw and 'write'.

Three and four-year-olds gain confidence in counting, sorting, matching and recognising relationships and working with numbers, shapes, space and measures. They see numbers as labels on wall displays, on their wheeled vehicles and painted parking spaces on the roadway outside are also numbered. Children join in counting and represent numbers with their fingers. For example, a children announces that he is four and holds up four fingers. Some recognise numerals. Children are introduced to positional language and compare sizes and shapes. They see examples of shapes, including 3D shapes they can handle; they talk about shapes of everyday objects. Practical activities provide children with opportunities to problem solve and calculate by combining objects, sorting and sharing out.

Children eagerly investigate many interesting objects and materials. The pre-school rooms are full of resources to promote exploration and staff are on hand to further develop children's natural curiosity. For example, children practise their cutting skills but the activity is made even more interesting because, black paper is provided and a light box. Children cut out a variety of shapes and investigate the effects that can be created by placing them on the light box. Children learn about the natural environment. They do gardening and gain an awareness of time as they plant bulbs and wait for them to grow. They regularly visit the group's allotment and meet other members of the community who share an interest in cultivation. They learn to care for the environment playing a part in recycling and making compost. Children also learn to care for living things. For example a group of children observe snails. They talk with an adult about what snails eat and how they should look after them. They watch as the snails make trails across a sheet of black paper and then with great care children return the snails to the tank that is their temporary home. Resource books are at hand to aid children's knowledge and understanding of the creatures. Children build and construct using their own design ideas, on small and large-scale indoors and outdoors. For example, a piece of drain pipe is used to create a chute down which toy cars and vehicles can be propelled. A child discovers that changing the angle of the pipe affects the speed at which the vehicle descends. Children freely use computers positioned at child level. Many operate these unaided and are able to complete simple programmes. Children also take photographs using a digital camera and can operate the listening centre equipment themselves.

Children develop their physical skills well. As well as being proficient movers they skilfully manipulate small objects. Many manage the fastenings on their coats, manipulate jigsaw pieces and use writing implements, paint brushes and scissors with control. They transfer materials steadily as they play at the sand tray and pot bulbs in soil.

The children are very imaginative. They dress up and take on roles linking up with others engaged in the same theme. Much of their imaginative play is based on their own first-hand experiences. Children excitedly perform puppet shows to friends and staff. The audience buy tickets and take their seats following the instruction of the performers. Then two four-year-olds don character hand-puppets and using extremely good imagination perform their own version of fairytales such as Beauty and the Beast. Children have good opportunities to enjoy singing activities and explore sounds with musical instruments. They participate in a varied range of activities where they can use their senses and express their feelings.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

All children are highly valued as individuals and fully included within the children's centre. Children and their parents are welcomed enthusiastically by staff, who actively seek to ensure that everyone who attends the centre feels comfortable and has good experiences. Children receive appropriate support to enable them to settle. Staff quickly learn about individual children's needs sourcing information from parents and any professionals involved in the children's care. Each child is respected, as is their family and cultural background. Children learn to respect one another. They play within an environment where that respect of differences can be seen to be valued. This is evident within wall displays, posters, print in different languages and positive images of gender, ethnicity, religion and disability.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children learn about their own and different cultures through planned activities and cultural celebrations. Children relate happily to the adults and approach them confidently. They have excellent opportunities to enjoy play with other children. For example, they sometimes choose to watch and then follow others and, at other times, they team up to complete tasks, such as tidying up and completing jigsaw puzzles. Children learn to be polite and behave well as staff enhance their skilful management of behaviour with frequent, sincere praise and consistent encouragement. Children wait patiently, sit quietly and take turns. Children enjoy time when they can relax and take time to think. They may snuggle-up in the book corner amongst the beanbags and cushions and enjoy a book quietly. They reflect upon their time at pre-school at the end of the session and also have time in the sensory room. Here the children rarely choose to talk; they are fascinated by the light movement and mood music and some will lie undisturbed to think.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities receive exceptional care from the staff who liaise closely with parents and all other professionals involved. The group has on-site support and children's specific requirements are identified early and accurately by staff and additional help is sought promptly to support children's development.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. The children's centre advocates working with parents to support children's learning. Parents of children in receipt of funding for nursery education are helped to understand about the Foundation Stage of learning and how the activities planned help children to develop. They receive very informative written and verbal information about the curriculum. They are also encouraged to attend taster sessions where they can participate in children's activities and gain an understanding of the learning potential the activities offer. Assessment records are produced in a way that clearly shows parents the progress of their children's learning. Children are cared for in accordance with their parents' wishes and there are highly effective procedures for parents and staff to exchange information so there is continuity of care between home and the centre. Parents of younger children also receive excellent information about their children's development. Children's progress records, developed to reflect the Birth to three matters framework make easy, informative reading and include photographic records of children's experiences and observations of their achievements. Parents know that they can speak with staff and share any concerns. They speak very highly of all aspects of the provision. There is a clear complaints procedure and a system to record any

complaints, should any be received. All policies and procedures are shared with parents, and staff within the centre are on hand to help parents who are unable to read written English.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Staff greatly enhance children's care through the exceptional quality of the organisation. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Excellent use is made of the highly qualified and experienced staff. They inspire other adults who spend time in the setting. Team spirit is fostered impressively with all adults having a clear understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities and offering support to one another instinctively.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Clear, visionary aims are achieved in practice as all staff are highly committed to continuous improvement and professional development. They routinely reflect upon their practice and evaluate their provision for children's care and education. This has a very positive impact on children's progress. The curriculum manager and qualified teacher work closely to monitor and improve the Foundation Stage provision. Together they motivate staff, who in turn ensure that children are always enthused to learn. Staff achieve the highest standards through accredited quality assurance and excellent training opportunities. Their friendly approach and willingness to support children and their families enables staff to successfully share this high quality provision with other settings in the area.

The children's centre has an excellent relationship with the primary school where they are based. It is seen very much as an integral part of the school and provides an invaluable support for the children and their families. Teaching staff within the centre liaise closely with those teaching in the school, sharing information that aids children's smooth transition into school.

The centre premises are extremely well organised. All areas within the centre are attractive and welcoming with high quality displays of photographs, children's work, interesting information and art work. Indoor and outdoor spaces are laid out to maximise play opportunities with easily accessible resources for children of all ages to choose. Babies have their own outdoor play space. Ample, high quality toys, furniture and equipment provide an exciting, well-balanced range of activities to support all areas of the children's development. Groups follow routines that work well and are familiar to the children. Careful planning utilises the use of the soft play room and sensory room to ensure that all children have the opportunity to enjoy the play experiences the rooms provide, without periods of waiting for other groups to vacate them. A high ratio of adults work with the children and extremely effective use is made of frequent one-to-one care.

All legally required documents that contribute to children's health, safety and wellbeing are clear and detailed. Policies and procedures are reflective of the practice within the children's centre. Records are accurately maintained and stored confidentially.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection it was recommended that the group ensure Ofsted is informed of all significant matters and to further develop sleep facilities for all children. To improve the

educational aspect of the provision the group was asked to further extend opportunities for children to develop climbing skills.

The group has been proactive in their response to the recommendations made. They now ensure that Ofsted is informed of all significant matters. There are separate sleep facilities for babies and toddlers. Two to three-year-olds routinely have a sleep after lunch and do so on individual sleep mats positioned in their playroom. They each have clean bedding and enjoy restful sleep. Older children rest, as they wish within the cosy book area of one of the pre-school rooms. Children can now use an extended range of climbing equipment. A climbing wall has been erected within the outdoor play area and the group also has the use of the school's large climbing structure. The structure comprises of steps, a climbing net, log slope with a rope for children to pull themselves up on. It also has slides and balance bridges.

### **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 outstanding. 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**

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

#### **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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)