



Northern College Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	302849
Inspection date	30 March 2006
Inspector	Karen Cockings
Setting Address	Wentworth Castle, Stainborough, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S75 3ET
Telephone number	01226 776011
E-mail	lpowell@northern.ac.uk
Registered person	L Powell
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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?

The Northern College Children's Centre opened in 1978. The centre serves students and employees of the college and is also open to families who live in the surrounding area. It operates from a single storey, pre-fabricated building in the grounds of Wentworth Castle and the Northern College, in the village of Stainborough, near Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

The premises provide six playrooms for the different age groups of children attending

the setting. There is also a kitchen, dining room, office and toilet facilities. A fully enclosed area is available for outdoor play.

The centre is open every day throughout the year except for Easter and Christmas holidays and occasional holidays during the summer period. Opening times are between 09.15 and 17.30. Care is provided for children aged between 6 months and 5 years. There is also out of school and holiday play care for children up to the age of 14 years. School children are brought to the centre by taxi and children may be resident in college accommodation with their parents.

There are currently 11 children on roll. This includes three children whose places are funded by the nursery education grant funding scheme. The setting welcomes children with special needs and with English as an additional language.

A team of 10 staff work directly with the children, all of whom are employed by the college and have a relevant early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean, comfortable environment where staff maintain good standards of hygiene, to keep children healthy. They regularly clean toys and equipment, particularly resources used by babies, and they ensure that appropriate procedures are followed when changing nappies and preparing food. Children are helped to understand the importance of good hygiene practice and are moving towards independence in attending to their personal care. Staff talk to them about the need for hand washing to prevent the spread of germs and children have their own toothbrushes to clean their teeth after lunch. At group times they discuss the weather and the clothes they need to keep themselves warm and dry.

Children enjoy a balanced, nourishing diet, which includes a variety of fruit and vegetables. Lunches are prepared in the college and brought over to the nursery in sealed containers. Parents and children are able to choose from the varied menu each day. Snacks always include a selection of fresh fruits. School age children have a drink only on their return from school because they eat shortly afterwards with their parents in the college. An additional member of staff with food hygiene training is employed to serve children their lunches and to provide general support over this period. Children's awareness of the importance of healthy eating is raised through displays and planned activities. For example, staff set out the role play area as an organic juice bar: children have made menus and they choose what fruit and vegetables they will have in their juice. They talk together about their favourites.

Children enjoy daily physical activity which contributes to their good health. They play outside in fine weather, developing good coordination and spatial awareness as they steer sit and ride toys. There is other suitable equipment to support physical development, such as climbing frame, hoops and balls. Indoors, they enjoy moving

their bodies in response to music and doing exercises together. They curl themselves up into a ball, stretch their arms, jump and hop. They learn about the effects of exercise upon their bodies as they feel their hearts beating and touch their heads to see if they are hot. Babies use furniture and equipment to pull themselves up and enjoy playing in the soft play area. There is a small enclosed space in the garden specifically for their use. Children develop good hand eye coordination because they have many opportunities to use equipment, such as paintbrushes, threaders and construction toys.

Babies happily explore their environment, supported by staff who stay physically and emotionally close. They talk with parents about children's needs and routines, finding sensitive ways to help them to feel secure. They manage routines, such as nappy changing, with care and concern for children's physical and emotional security. Children are well rested and alert because staff ensure that they are able to sleep in safe, quiet surroundings. School age children can relax in a comfortable, homely atmosphere after a busy day in school.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's security is given high priority. A buzzer and intercom device on the outer door enables staff to monitor access to the premises. Although children have space to move around, safety gates prevent them accessing other areas of the nursery unsupervised. Staff take effective measures to keep children safe, such as ensuring that sockets are covered and that equipment is clean and in good repair. They conduct routine checks of the premises and there is a designated health and safety officer for the college, to whom they report any potential hazards. All staff are expected to become familiar with safety procedures as part of their induction process and accident records are reviewed to ensure that appropriate action is taken as necessary.

Most aspects of fire safety are addressed well. Fire appliances are regularly checked and there is suitable equipment, such as an evacuation cradle to enable staff to take babies to safety quickly. Drills are held regularly and recorded. However, evacuation procedures are displayed on the staff notice board only, which means that they are not easily visible to all, including parents, visitors and children.

Children are well supervised and staff deployed effectively to ensure that ratios are met. At most times there are supernumerary staff who are able to provide additional support if needed. The play environment is well organised, allowing children the freedom to develop their play within safe limits and to gain independence with daily routines. The outdoor area is fully enclosed and provides grassy and hard surfaced areas where children can play and develop physical skills. Parts of the garden cannot be used in all weathers, however, and there are plans to improve the surface beneath the climbing frame so that it can be used more frequently.

Children use a varied range of suitable toys and play materials to support their play and learning. Resources are of good quality and organised well to enable children to access them easily. Low level shelving with word and picture labels help children to

make their own choices. Children learn how to keep themselves safe because staff make good use of opportunities to explain to them about hazards. For example, they remind children not to drive backwards in sit and ride toys because they cannot see who is behind them. Children develop an awareness of road safety as part of planned activities outdoors, using resources, such as stop signs and crossings.

Staff give priority to protecting children and have access to relevant training materials and guidance about local procedures. They have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in this area, which helps to ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in the setting. They are happy and secure because staff take time to get to know them and manage settling in arrangements very sensitively. They make sure they talk to parents to find out about individual routines and comforters, so that they can provide appropriate care. With the support of kind and attentive staff, children soon begin to settle and feel able to explore their environment. A photo board is used successfully to explain to new children about daily routines and what will happen next. This gives them reassurance and helps them to understand the sequence of the day.

Most children arrive happily and quickly settle to their chosen activity. They are confident to approach staff to tell them about family events or what has been happening in school. Children are proud to show staff their work, confident in the knowledge that staff are interested in their achievements. The school age children feel comfortable and at home: they know they can just relax if they wish in the television area or choose to do something more constructive. They behave well and are able to negotiate for themselves fair turn taking on the computer. Children form good relationships with adults and with each other. For example, they play cooperatively together in the role play area and at the water tray, responding well to the calm and positive atmosphere the staff are able to create.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This ensures that children progress well in all areas of development. They show increasing independence in choosing and carrying out activities; they know, for example, that they need an apron if they wish to play in the water or to paint at the easel. They manage personal care well, fetching their coats and trying hard to fasten buttons and zips. There are attractive resources to help children to develop these skills, such as wooden dolls with clothes and shoes that they can lace up and button. Children are interested and motivated to learn. They concentrate very well at group times, are willing to share their news and to listen to others.

Children are becoming confident speakers and listeners. Staff use resources and focused activities very effectively to encourage the development of language skills. For example, children are excited by the arrival of Squawk, the crow puppet and the

squirrel which is used to support the language and listening programme. They are beginning to link sounds to letters and have many opportunities to see the written word around them. They very much enjoy stories and rhymes. Children's early writing skills are fostered as they engage in activities to develop hand eye coordination and use writing materials for drawing pictures and mark making. They are successfully introduced to the different purposes of writing as they make menus for the juice bar and look at the recipe for play dough.

Children are developing good counting skills because they have regular opportunities to use number in their play and as part of daily routines. They count each other as they go out to play and they enjoy singing number rhymes together. Staff plan interesting activities to help children to develop an awareness of number and mathematical concepts. For example, children park their cars in numbered areas when playing outdoors and help to weigh the ingredients they need to make play dough. They have access to varied construction toys and to sand and water, which helps them to gain an understanding of shape, size and volume.

Children show interest in the world around them and are encouraged to think about the seasons and changes in the weather. They consider, for example, what clothes Teddy will need to keep him warm and dry on a rainy day. Children demonstrate increasing skill when using the computer and suitable programmes, which are easily accessible to them. They are developing an awareness of the natural world, talking together as they play at the water tray about the animals that can live in water. They smell and touch the leaves in the garden after rain. Children are encouraged to share news about significant events in their lives.

Children's creativity is effectively supported and encouraged. They use well resourced role play areas with imagination and enthusiasm. Staff readily join in their play, providing an extra stimulus to help children to develop the story line further. Children spend time exploring different materials and textures as they paint, use play dough and make collage pictures. They are introduced to different musical styles and encouraged to move their bodies in response to the music. Children reflect on how the music and their actions make them feel.

Staff use effective methods to support children in their play and learning. They ensure that the environment is stimulating, with a varied selection of resources and activities, so that children can make independent choices. They use questioning well to encourage children to think and to develop language skills. The behaviour of the children is good, contributing to a calm environment which is conducive to children's learning. Staff make regular observations of children's progress and use them effectively to identify the next steps in children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are comfortable in the setting and develop a sense of belonging. Most are familiar with the environment and are able to use it independently. They know where to hang their coats and how to find their name on the board as they arrive. Staff talk to parents about their children's care needs and are sensitive in their management of

the settling in process. They welcome children and parents warmly and ensure that children are able to participate fully.

Children play harmoniously together. They begin to show consideration for the needs of others as they take turns and share toys. Staff gently remind children about boundaries and help children to understand about the importance of respecting and valuing their own and others' achievements. For example, they learn that they should not rub out another child's picture on the large chalk board because that would be upsetting to her. Older children successfully negotiate fair turns on the computer and show pride in the art work they have completed. Staff give lots of meaningful encouragement and praise, which helps to build children's self-esteem. They use time and resources effectively to provide children with opportunities to talk together about things that are important to them.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered at the setting. They learn about the wider society through access to a range of resources, which reflect positive images of diversity. For example, there is a varied selection of books, many of which children can borrow to read at home. Staff plan specific activities to raise children's awareness of different lifestyles. Children listen and dance to Asian music and sometimes have opportunities to taste different foods. Resources to help children to gain an understanding of disability are more limited although there are plans to develop them further.

The partnership with parents works well, particularly as most of the children attend for relatively short periods of time while their parent is at the college. Staff make time to talk to parents at the start of each day and give lots of reassurance to the parents of children who are new to the setting. Children's development records are stored on computer and can be accessed at any time by the parent. Staff also offer appointments to parents who wish to discuss their children's progress in more detail. For the very young children care sheets are shared with the parent so that they are well informed about the events of their child's day. Staff work closely with parents to meet children's individual needs and to give support if there are difficulties. Parents' views are sought through the distribution of questionnaires by the college and a parent forum is held. The provision supports parents who are undergoing training themselves. Staff recognise that this places heavy demands on parents' time but try to find ways of involving them in their children's learning. For example, they encourage children and parents to use the library resource. However, there is potential to develop this aspect of the service further.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting is well organised to promote children's welfare and development. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are protected and cared for by staff who are suitable to do so. Clear induction procedures help staff to understand their roles and highlight responsibilities for health and safety. Staff are well qualified and work effectively together. They use their experience and knowledge of child development to create an environment which supports children's learning and

play.

Good staffing ratios and the employment of additional staff for certain times, such as lunchtime cover, help to ensure that children have the attention they need. Children are grouped appropriately, which enables staff to provide a balanced range of suitable activities and experiences. Space and resources are used well to support children's learning and growing independence. Clear policies and procedures underpin the daily operation of the service and are readily available to parents. The college has a system in place for reviewing and amending policies as necessary to ensure they are kept up to date. Most record keeping systems are maintained well and stored accessibly although the system for logging any complaints needs improvement.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. The manager is supernumerary at most times, which means that she is able to oversee the provision and give support and advice as necessary. There is a commitment to the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the service, reflected in the cooperative working relationships with other professionals, such as advisers from the local authority. The setting also plans to participate in a local quality assurance scheme. Through an effective appraisal system, staff are able to identify training needs and are encouraged to attend relevant training to develop their skills further. They regularly review their observation and planning systems to ensure that children's progress is being monitored carefully.

Overall, the needs of the range of children attending are being met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was recommended that the nursery revise child protection procedures to include the measures to be taken if an allegation were to be made against a member of staff. The setting has now amended the relevant policy and procedures to include this aspect of child protection. The procedures help to safeguard children's welfare by ensuring that the provider takes appropriate steps to deal with such circumstances.

The inspection of the nursery education recommended that the setting provide children with further opportunities and experiences to learn about healthy practice, such as exercise and its effects on the body. Staff now plan and provide a range of play experiences to increase children's awareness of how exercise helps them to stay healthy.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 Ofsted has received one complaint relating to Standard 1. A child protection issue was investigated and the provider cooperated fully. Social Services confirmed that the setting was not implicated in the investigation. Ofsted took no further action and the provision remains qualified to provide day care.

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

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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 that emergency evacuation procedures are visibly displayed in all areas of the nursery
- improve the system for recording any complaints made by parents

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 explore ways of involving parents in their children's learning.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk