

Headstart Chester Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY101776
Inspection date	09 January 2008
Inspector	Valerie Craven
Setting Address	32 Heath Road, Upton, Chester, CH2 1HX
Telephone number	01244 382333
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Registered person	Headstart Chester Limited
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 satisfactory. 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?

Headstart pre-school day nursery and out of school opened in February 2002.

The nursery operates from four children's rooms in a converted old school building and the out of school operates from four rooms in the school house, which is attached to the nursery premises. There is also access to enclosed outdoor play areas.

The nursery and out of school is situated in Heath Road, Upton, near to the city of Chester and serves the local community and further afield.

The nursery is registered to provide care for a maximum of 80 children aged from birth to five years and is open all year round, Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 18.00.

The out of school is registered to provide care for a maximum of 24 children aged from four years to under eight years, and is open from 08.00 to 09.00 and 15.00 to 18.00 during term time only and 8.00 to 18.00 during the school holidays.

The children on roll in the nursery include 11 funded three year olds and 32 funded four year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently no children attending with learning difficulties or disabilities and no children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 22 full time and two part time members of staff who work with the children. The manager is qualified to NVQ level 4 and is supernumerary. All but one members of staff have early years qualifications at level 2 or above. There are six members of staff that are currently working towards a level 3 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), three are working towards a level 4 and one is completing the Early Years Professional Status. The setting also employs two part time cooks. The setting liaises with the Children and Families Team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to take care of their own personal needs and learn to follow sound health and hygiene routines as they confidently wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before eating and after messy play. Pre-school children are developing a good understanding of the reasons to wash their hands through interesting topic work and regular discussion. Children's health is generally well promoted through effectively implemented hygiene procedures throughout the nursery. For example, good nappy changing procedures are in place and surfaces are cleaned using anti-bacterial spray. Routines for cleaning are adhered to throughout the nursery. However, this does not fully ensure that all areas are consistently clean, for example carpets.

A good range of policies and procedures are in place, but are sometimes inconsistently followed, for example, when a child becomes ill at the setting. Procedures for the storage and administration of medication are good and appropriate records are maintained to protect children's health. Many members of staff are qualified in first aid and are able to respond efficiently to minor accidents, to ensure that they are well cared for in the case of an emergency. Babies are cared for in accordance with their individual needs and toddlers needs are met as part of the nursery routines. Staff ensure that continuity of care is provided through good communication with parents.

Children learn about healthy eating and dental hygiene through planned topics and resources provided by Halton Primary Care Trust. The setting has achieved a gold, Eat Well, award for its commitment to healthy eating and has devised menus with input from parents, nutritionists and dieticians. Menus are changed on a three weekly basis and offer two cooked meals per day which are prepared on the premises. Meals are substantial and nutritious, such as chicken hotpot, tuna pasta bake, baked potatoes and cheese and onion pie with mashed potato and green beans. Children enjoy home made puddings, such as apple crumble and custard and banana cake. At snack times there is always a variety of fresh fruit, introducing children to interesting tastes, such as kiwi and melon, and enabling children to make choices. Milk and water is offered at regular intervals for the younger children and squash is provided in the out of school club. Children have water available throughout the session which they are able to access independently if they are thirsty.

The setting benefits from five different outdoor play areas, providing interesting opportunities for physical play, although the areas are not effectively used to their maximum potential. Children gain confidence and coordination as they use wheeled vehicles and access play

equipment in the soft play area. They are also encouraged to regularly participate in planned activities, such as football and music and movement as the setting recognise the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Staff are aware of the benefits of fresh air and ensure that children are suitably dressed before taking them outdoors.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. The old school room building offers spacious play areas and the school house is organised to provide different areas for school aged children to play and to relax. The nursery is bright and welcoming for children and parents. Safety equipment is appropriately used to minimise the risk of accidents, such as gates and finger strips on doors. Security is a strong feature of the setting with an intercom system, key code door locks, close circuit television cameras (CCTV) and a well implemented visitors book to ensure that children are well protected. Outdoors there are five different enclosed play areas providing a variety of safe surfaces, such as grass, bark and rubber, in addition to a hard area for using wheeled vehicles. Climbing equipment is in place, is risk assessed and used when dry to minimise the risk of slipping. Regular safety checks, electrical testing and fire alarms take place routinely to promote children's safety.

Indoor play areas are organised to care for children within specific age groups and the equipment available in each room is age appropriate. However, resources and play materials are limited in some areas. Toys are stored at a low level, which ensures that they can be accessed independently, but toys are more safely accessible in some areas than in others. Staffing ratios are maintained throughout the nursery, but staff are not always effectively deployed to promote children's safety through attentive supervision. Fire drills are practised regularly to ensure that most staff and children are aware of the procedures to follow in the case of an emergency.

Children are escorted to and from local schools by foot and in vehicles. Rigorous procedures are in place when walking to school and crossing roads. Children and staff wear fluorescent safety jackets and children learn how to keep themselves safe through regular routines. Vehicles are appropriately maintained and insured and drivers checked to promote children's safety. Children learn how to keep themselves safe through interesting trips and visitors to the setting, such as fire fighters. All staff have a good awareness of child protection and a sound knowledge of the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff record accidents and existing injuries in order to protect children. Information is available throughout the setting regarding the correct procedures to be followed in the case of a concern. A member of staff has responsibility for child protection and policies are well maintained to safeguard children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and confident throughout the nursery. Qualified staff are aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and observe children well, in order to plan activities which meet the children's interests and stage of development. Developmental records are maintained by key workers, which document children's progress and are used to inform staff of children's individual needs, as they progress through the rooms. Children's experiences differ throughout the setting depending on the level of interaction and communication with staff, which is variable. Some staff engage in play with the children, which greatly benefits their enjoyment, confidence and self-esteem. Older children enjoy playing football with staff and develop good relationships

which enhances their enjoyment at the setting. In the out of school and holiday club, children are able to make choices about where they play and are offered a variety of craft, games, outdoor play and role play. Planned themes introduce children to new topics and children are encouraged to participate in activities, but their choices are respected. Staff accept suggestions from the children about what they like to do and provide appropriate materials, for example, paper to make interesting aeroplanes. During the holidays visits are planned to interesting places, such as farms,

gardens, museums and the zoo.

Babies are generally well supported and happy at the setting as they explore the environment, access the toys which are available and participate in activities, such as making chocolate crispy cakes and jelly play. They are delighted as they take their first steps and are supported by caring staff. Most areas for younger children are well resourced, however, others are less stimulating, which restricts children's opportunities to explore and investigate. Some staff become focused on the activities of individual children or domestic tasks, which has an impact on interaction with and supervision of, the larger group. Toddlers like to look at 'discovery bottles,' push dolls in prams and play with cars. They are well supported in one to one activities as they finger paint and wash their hands. Experiences for children aged two to four are good, with a balance of child initiated, small group and large group activities. Children have fun as they use play dough, sand and small toy animals. They develop good communication skills as they sing songs and rhymes or share books with caring staff in small groups. Children develop good concentration and persevere as they roll out dough and cut shapes. They develop confidence and independence as they select toys and help to tidy up. Throughout the setting children learn to care for living things, such as land snails.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are effectively challenged and often actively engaged in a good range of stimulating and exciting experiences, such as searching for shapes around the room. Skilled staff engage in purposeful interaction with the children. They have thorough knowledge of the Foundation Stage and effectively record relevant and meaningful observations of children's learning, which is clearly used to plan further activities and to record children's progress towards the early learning goals. Children's next steps evolve from the regular observations and evaluations. The learning environment is well organised to promote the six areas of learning and children are able to make choices from the variety of toys, games and resources, which are stored at a low level.

A good balance of self initiated play, small and large group work ensures that children participate in a variety of experiences, such as songs, stories, number games and painting. Transition times, such as after snacks and meals are less organised and children sometimes lack direction. Children demonstrate enthusiasm when participating in activities, such as singing songs, show and tell and searching for shapes in the pre-school room. They develop good dispositions towards learning as they concentrate on self chosen activities, such as playing in sand, painting and building with magnetic blocks. Children engage happily in group sessions as they sing nursery rhymes and action songs. A sense of belonging and self-esteem is nurtured as children proudly show their toys and tell others of their activities at the weekend. Children are well supported as they speak to the group and are encouraged to listen to each other.

Children are becoming skilful and confident communicators as staff listen to what they have to say with interest. They are also encouraged to speak Spanish and have regular sessions to

develop their understanding of language. They show an interest in books and listen attentively at story time and enjoy recognising sounds as they learn new rhymes. Name recognition is promoted as pegs and water bottles are labelled. Children are encouraged to make marks using a variety of materials including using a writing area, chalk boards and white boards. They also like to make patterns in the sand and use paint confidently. Sometimes mark making opportunities are incorporated into the role play area and children can choose to participate in more formal pencil control activities, as they follow handwriting patterns or learn to overwrite their names.

Children have numerous opportunities to practise their counting skills in large group situations. They confidently count and calculate through songs, such as 'five speckled frogs', 'five little men in a flying saucer' and 'ten fat sausages'. Children respond enthusiastically to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary through daily routines as they learn about days, dates and times. They are excited to find shapes within the environment and use language of size and shape confidently in their play. Children learn about the environment in which they live, through planned topics which encourage them to grow seeds and feed birds. They learn about the wider world and the universe through displays, books and planned activities. Interesting displays and positive images of diversity in the pre-school room help children to learn about diversity in society. Children enjoy using construction materials and are able to access the computer independently if they choose to.

Children's imagination is developing well through access to role play and small world toys. Materials for role play are changed to provide different scenarios, such as shops, a home corner or café. Dressing up costumes are available, providing imaginative opportunities for both boys and girls. Children respond to music as they tidy up the room and move quickly or slowly. Children look forward to visitors to the nursery who provide enjoyable experiences, such as music and movement, Spanish and soccer. Sometimes however, the activities do not take place in an appropriate environment, for example, children play soccer indoors rather than using the outdoor facilities. Children play outside some of the time, but do not use the outdoor environment to its full potential. The outdoor areas are equipped with climbing equipment and imaginative areas, such as a house and pirate ship. Opportunities exist for children to develop a sense of space and gross motor skills as they use equipment including wheeled vehicles or play with planned activities, such as parachute games.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff have an understanding of equal opportunities and encourage children to participate in the activities which are offered. Some children learn about diversity through planned activities and resources, such as dolls and books. There are few positive images of diversity throughout the setting, with the exception of the pre-school room, which displays interesting pictures for discussion. Children like to look at photographs of themselves and develop good self-esteem. Older children learn about festivals from other cultures, although not necessarily at the most appropriate time. Traditional festivals, such as Christmas are celebrated and the neighbouring community centre is used to invite parents to nativity plays. Each month staff are made aware of interesting or important events which may be used as a basis for activities, to develop children's understanding of the wider world.

All children are treated with respect, especially when offering intimate care. They enjoy good relationships with staff who are aware of the needs of most of the children. Regular observations help to identify children who may have learning difficulties or disabilities and staff are aware

of how to support children, should the need arise. Most areas of the building have been made accessible to promote inclusion. Children's behaviour is generally very good and staff are good role models who encourage children to be polite and to take turns and share. Incident forms are well maintained and children are rewarded with positive praise for good behaviour. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

A large amount of information is available to parents throughout the setting, in the form of policies, procedures, newsletters, menus and staff information. Continuity of care is established through daily written communication regarding children's day, such as what they have eaten, how long they have slept for and when nappies are changed. Staff at the out of school club do not use notes, but chat informally with parents when children are collected. Staff build good relationships with parents which enables them to resolve most concerns quickly and informally. The complaints policy makes parents aware of the procedures to be followed in the case of a concern and the recording of a small number of complaints is clear and concise. The setting welcomes the opinions of parents and regularly conducts customer satisfaction surveys in order to meet parental requirements and to improve the quality of care for children. A flexible approach is offered and the setting considers flexible opening hours to meet the need for childcare. Systems are in place to share information between parents and staff, regarding the needs of individual children. Written permission is obtained for a variety of reasons, but not for all children, which means that most children are cared for in accordance with parental wishes. Parents spoken to are very happy with the care which their children receive and enjoy good relationships with approachable staff.

Partnership with parents and carers is good.

Parents of children receiving Nursery Education receive daily written information regarding activities which have taken place regarding the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum and subjects which their children have enjoyed. Staff observations mean that they are aware of children's interests, preferences and developmental progress. Records of achievement give a chronological story of children's time in the pre-school, charting progress through stepping stones towards the early learning goals and are evidenced by profiles based on observations, which are available to parents. Parents are made aware of their children's progress and achievements through informal discussion and planned parents evenings. They are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning as children take turns to take home a teddy bear for the weekend and compile a diary of his activities.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by caring staff, the majority of whom are well qualified. A sound recruitment and vetting procedure ensures that staff are suitable to work with children. A management structure enables many staff to undertake responsibilities and they have the opportunity to attend relevant training courses. Staff are clear about their coordination roles and responsibilities, such as special educational needs, child protection, staff training and 'Birth to three matters' framework, and cascade information to other members of staff in regular meetings. Leaders and managers have a clear idea of their expectations of staff. However, the general care within the setting is not closely monitored to ensure that staff are always efficiently deployed, to enable close supervision of children whilst carrying out other roles and responsibilities.

Many effective systems are in place to ensure the efficient running of the setting, such as the practise of fire drills, staff appraisals and supervisor meetings. Audits are maintained to ensure that the manager is aware of any needs regarding training and in order to promote children's well-being and to meet the statutory requirements. The manager regularly considers self evaluation to record improvement in practice. Most relevant documentation to promote children's safety and well-being is accessible and well maintained, although past registers are not stored on the premises and children's records are not regularly updated to ensure that all information is current. Policies and procedures for the running of the setting are effectively updated and well maintained, shared with parents and staff and are generally well understood but not always consistently implemented.

Leadership and Management in relation to Nursery Education is good. The manager is supernumerary and is able to offer support when required. Leaders have clear vision of how they would like to improve the setting in order to enhance children's experiences further. The nursery group benefits from well qualified, caring and enthusiastic staff who work hard to meet children's individual needs. The clear links between observations, planning, assessment and record keeping, effectively enable staff to monitor the effectiveness of the early years curriculum. Regular meetings to identify the areas for improvement within the setting ensure that issues are addressed. Support is welcomed from external agencies and staff are encouraged to participate in professional development in order to promote a good learning environment for children.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was required to ensure that records of medication are signed by parents, obtain written parental permission to seek emergency medical advise or treatment and to devise incident forms. Procedures to administer medication, including written records are good, ensuring children's health and safety. Incident forms are in place and well maintained. Registration documents have been revised to include permission to seek emergency medical treatment, however, permission has not been obtained for those children who have attended for a number of years, as forms have not been regularly updated. The provider was required to make a number of improvements regarding the delivery and monitoring of Nursery Education. There are now clear criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the early years curriculum. Skilled staff provide appropriate levels of challenge for children in order for them to make good progress in all areas of learning. The setting are supported by the area Children and Families team and continually seek ways of improving practice.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 satisfactory. 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 that policies and procedures are effectively implemented to minimise the risk of cross infection
- ensure appropriate resources are readily available for all children across the provision
- ensure that all staff are deployed effectively on a daily basis to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all 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):

- further develop children's opportunities to access all areas of learning in the outdoor 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