

Smallworld Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305301
Inspection date	20 February 2008
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting Address	Leftwich Primary School, Old Hall Road, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 8DH
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Registered person	Smallworld Pre-School and Link Club Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Sessional 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?

Smallworld Preschool and Link Club is one of four groups owned by Smallworld Preschools and Link Clubs Ltd. It opened in 2001 and operates from a mobile classroom in the grounds of a school in Northwich. A maximum of 22 children may attend the pre-school at any one time and 24 children may attend the out of school club at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.15 to 14.45 term time only. The out of school club is open from 08.00 to 09.00 and 15.00 to 18.00 during term time and 08.00 to 18.00 during school holidays, if required. All children share access to secure outside play areas. Full day care is also offered consisting of a combination of sessions.

There are currently 65 children aged from two to under five years on roll in the pre-school. Of these, 56 children receive funding for early education. There are currently 21 children on roll in the link club. The nursery is able to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. However, there are no children currently attending for whom this is the case.

The pre-school and link club employs seven members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a working towards a qualification.

The setting is a member of the Preschool Learning Alliance and receives support from a teacher from Sure Start.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay very healthy because practitioners teach children to take responsibility for their health from an early age and provide a healthy session style. Children are independent and take themselves to the toilet and remember to wash and dry hands, use aprons and tissues, and put on coats for themselves because staff rehearse this with them daily. However, there is no soap in the toilet used by children in the 'rising fives' group on the day of inspection. Frequent discussions about the weather, germs and healthy bodies mean that children have a good understanding of why they should take regular drinks, clean the table before eating food and use individual paper towels and drinks bottles. Kitchen areas are very well organised and kept clean, including daily sterilising of drinks bottles before re-use. Children also have some involvement in keeping their play environment clean, for example, by putting each drinks bottle into the washing up box after each use and sweeping up the sand under the sand tray.

Good attention to individual children's health needs means that toileting and dietary needs are appropriately catered for according to each child's needs and their parents' wishes. Most staff have first aid qualifications and consent is obtained for the seeking of any necessary emergency medical treatment. Children enjoy good levels of physical activity and challenge both indoors and outdoors, taking part in climbing, balancing, ball skills, group games, chalking and riding activities in the playground. The continuous provision of activities is available both outside and indoors when weather permits and indoor group activities include plenty of opportunities to jump, clap and move about. In addition, there is a nearby nature trail, field and obstacle area which are regularly used. All this activity supports pre-school children's physical health very well, but children attending after school are not encouraged to play outside on the day of inspection.

Children are well nourished and enjoy a healthy diet through snacks, such as carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, raisins, oranges, toast and crackers with milk or water. Brown bread is sometimes offered and 'rising fives' learn to make their own jam or cheese spread sandwiches. Pre-school children's manners and independence in pouring, serving and clearing are fostered well through a small group rolling snack routine run by one staff member. However, the 'rising fives' group are not prompted to remember their manners and do less for themselves than the two and three-year-olds. In addition, children attending after school are not involved in preparing their snack and have less healthy blackcurrant squash, biscuits and crackers with chocolate spread as options as well as fruit. Pre-school children staying for lunch enjoy healthy picnic lunches because parents are encouraged to adhere to healthy options put to them in booklet form when their child starts at the setting.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an exceptionally welcoming, bright and welcoming home room environment with a happy and purposeful atmosphere. The space is invitingly set out to maximise children's choices and provide cosy spaces to set up and use the ample resources. Children's coats and bags are stored on easy to reach hooks and children store their own work in pockets ready to take home. The walls are covered with displays of children's work, photos of them at play and accessibly stored and labelled resources to select from. Children use a good range of stimulating resources which contribute enormously to their enjoyment and achievement. A number of objects and natural materials, such as stones, shells, textiles and cones are available to use and a variety of media, such as shaving foam, couscous, pasta, water and sand are enjoyed. Children explore and investigate using magnifying glasses and binoculars and use a recorder to hear the animal sounds they can make. In addition, areas for role play, books, construction, craft, mark making and painting are always on offer, with spaces for children to set up their own choices, perhaps making play dough or setting up a train track. As a result, children settle to play exceedingly well, finding challenges all around the room as well as knowing where to find their favourite things. However, the room used for the twice weekly 'rising fives' group is less well resourced and set up, although children confidently use the painting easel, role play hairdressers, craft table, construction and colouring areas.

There is good security to the public entrance door of the pre-school and the 'rising fives' room. Staff are highly vigilant, keep the registers accurate and up to date and competently manage for small groups to go outside with a staff member. They know where each child is at all times and work as a team so that a child can safely return to use the toilet as necessary. Careful arrangements using passwords and enrolment information are made to ensure that staff know exactly who is collecting a child and who is permitted to do so if this is not the usual parent or designated carer. Children's safety is also supported well through documentation and staff's practice. Regular fire drills are held and records are kept of these. Electrical appliances, wiring and fire equipment are checked and documentation about what to do in the event of any emergency is posted. Risk assessments are undertaken to manage all planned trips safely as well as the play environment and identified hazards are promptly fixed. In addition, people from the community who keep us safe come in to teach children about fire and road safety, for example.

Children are learning about how to keep themselves safe because staff teaching about safety is clear and balanced. Children learn how to walk carefully down the ramp in case it is slippery after the rain, to keep away from the building site fence, to make space indoors for their friend's wheelchair, to walk slowly indoors and to carry chairs carefully. Non-slip mats under the water tray minimise slipping hazards and staff show children how to manage tools, such as cutlery, glue and scissors as they make things or prepare snacks. They take considered risks as they are supervised to use the balancing and monkey bars, ropes or climb on the gate in the field. They are taught to avoid accidents, for example, by putting their feet on the floor when sitting on chairs.

Children are well protected from abuse because all staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection and safeguarding procedures. Staff understand how to work together with other agencies to support children who are at risk and have procedures in place in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. The named person for child protection has been on recent safeguarding children training and there is a named staff member for any children 'looked after' under local authority children's services.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are good. They immediately settle to play, discover and experiment because the environment and staff offer them a high level of challenge, choice and independence. For example, children choose the magnifying glasses and binoculars and go outside looking for birds, squirrels and insects. They experiment with the brushes and cones, seeing what patterns they make in the shaving foam. They use their fingers to spontaneously trace out the letters in their names or simply tease one another and the adults by spreading the foam. Staff offer ideas and question and challenge children to discuss what they are doing and thinking so that they can articulate their ideas and become confident to express themselves. Children are given time to persist in favourite activities and try new things, developing good social and communication skills as they go. For example, children enjoy choosing props from the bag and thinking of related songs to sing and individuals complete numerous drawings and paintings, mixing colours and making pictures of adults. However, staff do not always take opportunities to discuss children's art or record what they say about it to value and extend individual children's learning from their art. Nevertheless, they help children to extend their knowledge and develop their natural curiosity through real experiences, for example, as they mix with their older friends in the school library or take a trip to town on the bus.

The session routine is simple and group times are skilfully used by the staff to enthusiastically explain what choices children have, to talk about the weather and the date and to find out who is here. This helps children to have a strong sense of group identity with their friends. Children attending the after school club are also offered a good variety of pastimes, including interesting craft ideas which capture their imagination, such as making puppets or rocket pencil holders. Activities in the pre-school are linked to a theme, although this is not often discussed very clearly with children to help them see connections. Children are not forced to come and sit down or leave their chosen activities. Instead they complete what they are doing and then come to the snack table or help with tidying up. In this way each child feels highly valued and confident to show staff what they can do and talk about their ideas. For example, a child talks about his discovery that red and green paint together make brown, while another leads the group at the sand tray to fill a container with the sand, stones and shell mixture.

Nursery education:

The quality of the teaching and learning is good. Staff are inspiring in their ability to provide a nurturing atmosphere and foster high levels of enjoyment, self-confidence and good social behaviour. Staff's skills, experience and sensitivity to each child's needs enable them to promote each one's development in all areas through choices that the child has made for themselves. As a result, children are extremely eager to learn because they feel in control and can follow their interests. For example, children who enjoy role play create detailed and accurate scenes in the hairdressers salon and the pet shop, developing their knowledge and understanding of how things work and their social, creative and physical skills as they manipulate the hairdryers, create hair styles and serve their customers. All the while, staff are helping them to communicate, question and try things for themselves, talking about number and the way things work in a relevant way to help children solve problems, notice what things are like and explain their thoughts. Similarly, children's early reading and writing skills are enhanced by free access to numerous mark making media, using paint, chalk, water, brushes and pencils to 'write' in support of their role, physical or creative play.

Each child has a developmental profile highlighting what stepping stones they have reached during each term. Evidence examples of their work are retained in note, photo and work evidence form to aid completion of each profile, but this evidence is not collated on a regular basis into a working document from which to identify the next steps which individual children need to take. Instead, evidence is used to put together a memories book which is presented to each child when they graduate from pre-school. Display books of photos are also placed in relevant areas around the room to show interested parents how children's play and activities are leading to their development under each of the six areas of learning. Some planned activities are assessed, but plans are very flexible to move with children's interests and enjoyment. This maximises children's progress when key worker staff are regularly in touch with and steering children towards the next things they need to learn. However, some staff working with pre-school children on the second day of inspection are unfamiliar with their individual needs which results in few written observations, children sometimes playing alone, and input from adults being confined to general ideas during group games and circle and snack times.

Children are making good progress in all the areas of learning. Staff are successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development, providing a basis from which the other areas of learning follow. Children are actively listened to and given time to make choices and talk about their wishes and feelings. They are supported and shown kindly how to think about one another and to feel part of the school and wider community. For example, simple board and circle games teach them to take turns and negotiations help them to share the use of a popular mechanical toy. However, computers, books and music are underused during the inspection.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are independent, confident and considerate learners because the staff design the environment to maximise its welcome and children's sense of belonging. They use photographs and label work so that children look around and know that they are a valued part of their pre-school. For example, children have painted portraits of the staff which are hung alongside the staff photographs and names. Each child also has a name star and an individual named wallet to put their things in. Staff greet children individually with their carers and employ special techniques, such as giving a favourite toy, if children need this to help them settle. Younger children attending after school are given special help and attention from staff and older children to help them feel at home. Above all, warmth and pleasure at seeing the children and fun at registration times, ensure that children feel a strong sense of belonging here.

Children are helped to consider and value diversity because there are themed craft activities, for example, about the Chinese new year. However, there are few resources such as books, dressing up, dolls, play figures, puzzles, posters and games which show positive images of various cultures and disabilities. Children and adults with physical disabilities and behaviour or learning needs are included fully in the life of the setting because the setting is on one level and staff are both committed to inclusion and skilled to identify emerging concerns. They liaise sensitively with parents and relevant professionals to ensure that they plan and work together using recognised and consistent techniques which benefit children with emerging special needs. However, there are no children currently attending with identified needs.

Staff are skilled and successful in promoting good behaviour and encouraging social skills because they include and involve children in decision making, setting up and clearing away activities. Children behave well and are able to share and cooperate because staff model

appropriate play skills, ask children to help them to resolve conflicts themselves, and offer easy ways for children to respect, consider, praise and apologise to one another without losing face or feeling humbled. Children enjoy 'putting on their listening ears' after a loud and funny action session and listen and watch attentively to see what is inside the 'magic bag'. Children feel valued and in control in the out of school club too and adhere to the simple and positive ground rules that are displayed on their notice board. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Children receive consistency of care between all elements of their life because key staff communicate well with parents and obtain good quality consents and child details from the outset. Parents are given a detailed brochure about the policies and procedures of the setting including details of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Most parents complete the forms given about what their child can do when they start at pre-school so that staff can plan for each child from their individual starting points. There are also regular newsletters incorporating relevant information from pre-school and flyers explain the themes and give very useful ideas about how to extend children's learning at home. There are individual appointments for parents to hear about their child's progress and parents are encouraged to take home books each week to use with their child. They can discuss their child at any time and the parent notice board, staff name badges and photographs make it easier for them to remember who their child's key worker is. Parents see the work brought home, but do not usually view evidence of children's progress because it is not compiled by staff and made easily available as the terms go along. Nevertheless, parent questionnaires and thank you cards and letters indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the part the pre-school plays in children's progress and social confidence.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Recruitment, vetting, induction, systems work well to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by trained, up to date and motivated staff. There are regular staff meetings and all staff and key workers are well motivated to work as a team to meet the needs of each individual child in the group. Staff deployment contributes well to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff to child ratios are high, and the highly motivated staff see the best outcomes when they are working with consistent staff.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The provider and manager provide daily, weekly and meaningful support to all staff. They act as approachable role models and are highly committed to promoting an inclusive environment where every child matters. Up to date policies, procedures and handbooks are clearly accessible and well organised to show how the setting works to promote children's health, safety, enjoy, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. In addition, the provider and manager regularly review and adapt the provision, making good use of professional advice, inspections and quality assurance and improvement documents, striving to move the provision forward. However, individual staff special interest training, appraisal and career development are less well developed. Nevertheless, 'in house' training is regular and responsibilities to be the named person for child protection, behaviour, equal opportunities and disabilities are shared.

Policies and procedures work well in practice to promote good outcomes for children. Accident, incident, medication and complaint procedures work well and child details, daily registers, safety checklists and risk assessments support children's welfare and safety well. Children's profiles

and evidence of their work are accessibly kept for frequent and easy reference. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations made at the inspection of nursery education in November 2004. These have been acted upon to improve the teaching and learning. The first recommendation was to monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning so that the provision continues to identify areas for improvement. Good use of advisors and a day care providers' evaluation document is supporting the ongoing identification of strengths and areas for improvement. These are being worked on diligently and help to maintain high quality in teaching and learning outcomes.

Secondly, the amount of time spent passively as a large group has been effectively addressed so that large group registration times are shorter, more active and stimulating, and give children a chance to take turns, move about actively jumping or clapping, speak in front of the group and plan their play.

The third recommendation was to positively assist children with weak speech patterns. Staff now actively listen to children, model clear speech back to them, and liaise with parents and other agencies where there are concerns about speech development. Letters are discussed according to children's stage of development rather than routinely with all children and staff encourage children to discuss ideas both one to one and in groups.

There was one recommendation made at the last inspection of care in January 2005. This was to provide resources and activities to help children develop their language skills. This is achieved through offering children lots of choices to make and talking to them about what they are doing. They are developing confidence in using descriptive language as they explore varied textures, objects and materials as well as their indoor and outdoor environments. Meal and snack times are also well used to develop conversation.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that there are supplies of soap accessible in all toilet areas used and develop school age children's opportunities to be involved in preparing and choosing healthy snacks and fresh air and exercise
- extend the resources, images and play ideas available to provide positive images of disability and diverse cultures.

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):

- extend the use of ICT, books and music to support variety in the curriculum
- extend the use of observation notes and photographs for documenting children's progress, planning their individual next steps and involving parents in their child's learning and development throughout their pre-school career
- extend the systems for staff training and appraisal to promote continued staff development.

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