



Just Learning Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY233534
Inspection date	19 April 2006
Inspector	Rosemary Davies
Setting Address	Monks Lane, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7TD
Telephone number	01635 524832
E-mail	newbury@justlearning.co.uk
Registered person	Just Learning Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Just Learning Nursery in Newbury registered in 2002. It is one of a chain of nurseries run by Just Learning Limited. It operates in purpose-designed premises within the grounds of Newbury College, on the southern outskirts of the town. The accommodation comprises ten rooms for the children, who are grouped according to age. Further facilities include a multi-purpose area, office, kitchen, laundry, staff room and toilets. There is ready access to a large, fully enclosed outdoor area.

The nursery opens each weekday throughout the year between 07:30 and 18:00, with the exception of Bank Holidays. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery draws children from a wide geographical area including many whose parents attend Newbury College.

The nursery is registered for a maximum of 104 children aged between 8 weeks and 8 years. Of these, not more than 36 children may be under 2 years of age, at any one time. There are currently 99 children on roll. This includes 16 children who receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special needs and those learning English as an additional language.

There are 25 staff members employed in the nursery. Of these, 8 hold relevant qualifications equivalent to National Vocational Qualifications level 3 or above, in early years childcare and education. There are 5 staff qualified to level 2. A further 8 members of staff are undertaking appropriate early years training at present. There are 6 members of staff working directly with the funded children. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health and physical well-being is maintained well in this nursery. Children enjoy healthy meals, freshly cooked on the premises, using fresh fruit and vegetables. These offer a well-balanced diet both daily and over a longer period. The cook invites all in the nursery to make suggestions for new meals. The varied menu helps maintain children's interest in their food and encourages them to try new tastes. A few children struggle to use knives and forks. Some staff do not offer immediate help, so food may become cold before being eaten. Children enjoy regular healthy snacks. Older children help themselves to these owing to the introduction of a 'self-service' system. They learn the fundamentals of healthy eating, knowing that fresh fruit is good for them and that too many sweets are not, because these contain "lots of sugar".

Children drink according to their needs, with fresh water readily available across the nursery. Staff offer water to younger children after energetic outdoor play. All children, including babies, experience fresh air at least twice a day, as new routines have been introduced. Older children make full use of challenging climbing and balancing equipment to develop their co-ordination skills.

Children's individual health needs are acknowledged and met. Staff find out about these before children start in the nursery and record them carefully. Effective procedures mean that staff know about the particular requirements of children for whom they take responsibility, such as allergies.

Children play in a clean environment. Staff use effective hygiene practices. These include consistent methods in the baby room, such as rigorous nappy changing procedures in which staff use disposable aprons and gloves. Visitors to this room

wear shoe covers to help prevent the introduction of germs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children use a safe nursery environment. Most staff understand the purpose of risk assessment and follow appropriate procedures. Monthly health and safety checks help ensure that equipment and resources are safe for children's use. Security arrangements are very good; closed-circuit television monitors visitors to the nursery. Staff challenge anyone they do not recognise and examine identification documents carefully. All staff take training to further protect the children in their care.

Children learn the basics of keeping themselves safe when on outings around the nursery. They know they must hold hands, stop at the kerb-side and keep 'looking and listening' when crossing roads. Staff give clear instructions and check that children understand. Regular outings to the nearby superstore, pond and college library are risk-assessed to identify possible hazards and action is taken to minimise these, such as noting the best places to cross roads.

The nursery offers a modern, light, bright and welcoming environment to the children. Many resources and materials are stored at child height. Children often choose what they wish to play with as the presentation of resources has been re-organised. All have plenty of space, both indoors and outdoors, in which to play. Effective use is made of the space available in all rooms, with the exception of that for the oldest children. Here, for example, the 'role-play' area is ill defined and intrudes on the area where children eat. This causes problems as children playing get in the way of those laying tables for lunch. The nursery offers a 'resource area' from which children and staff may select other items, such as outdoor equipment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies thoroughly enjoy their play experiences, which staff plan using the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This is used in all rooms for children under three years of age but some staff lack a thorough understanding of it and of child development. As a result, children are sometimes expected to do things beyond their capabilities, such as sitting still for long stories, trying to understand number 'flashcards' or using equipment they cannot control. Nevertheless, children enjoy learning through using all their senses, exploring a wide range of different materials and media, such as pulses, dough and paint. Staff encourage children's personal independence well by encouraging them to practise putting on their 'wellies' for example, which they thoroughly enjoy.

All children in the nursery enjoy special events, such as the arrival of the Easter bunny and the Easter Bonnet Parade. These excite their interest and stimulate many conversations, although staff fail to capitalise on this to promote other learning opportunities. Overall, children experience a satisfactory range of play-based

activities. Staff pay good attention to children's care needs, providing nourishment, fresh air and exercise, and places to sleep and rest when needed.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are developing their understanding of the Foundation Stage through training. As a result, they plan experiences for the children, which cover all six areas of learning and children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage, an improvement since the last inspection. Staff do not plan any outdoor learning other than physical play and outings so children cannot benefit from playing on a larger scale.

Children have a strong sense of the nursery as a community. They enjoy greeting the manager and nursery's cook on their visits to playrooms. They know the nursery routines, its layout and where extra resources are stored. They enjoy getting together with others for a photograph of everyone in their Easter bonnets. Children show confidence in talking with staff, visitors and when together as a group. They form friendships and get on well together, being able to share and take turns, such as when using the play till and shopping baskets or waiting to use a camera.

Children enjoy many activities, particularly those that are well matched to their stage of development and interests, such as pretending to care for patients in hospital. This role-play area is set up well. Here they practise their early writing skills as they pretend to note patients' names and what they need to make them better. They show they understand what writing is for, good pencil control and make some recognisable letters. Some adult-led activities are not matched to children's abilities. This is because some staff are less secure in their understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn. Some children have to sit for too long attempting tasks which do not interest them. At such times their attention drifts and they become fidgety.

Development of children's personal independence has improved since the last inspection. The oldest children enjoy deciding when to eat their snack and serving themselves. All enjoy choosing what they will play with when not taking part in adult-led activities. Some staff place less value on these activities, however, so that children receive little support when using them. At the painting easel, for example, children paint well from their imaginations but staff do not provide any stimuli or talk with them about what they produce. Most staff do not question the children effectively and this hampers children's learning.

Children's ability to be independent learners is not supported sufficiently, although there have been some worthwhile innovations since the last inspection. Children can see what they may have for snack as picture prompts and numbers show them. They see they may have, for example, three pieces of malt-loaf and one handful of sultanas. Thus, they may help themselves, at the same time using mathematics for a practical purpose, counting out exactly what they are allowed. Early mathematics is used well in other daily routines, such as putting out sets of cutlery at lunch time and counting how many places are needed. Children enjoy undertaking such tasks and being the day's 'helper', which boosts their self-esteem.

All children, including any who may have special educational needs, benefit from the favourable adult to child ratio. This allows for much individual attention from staff and helps children develop their conversation skills. They enjoy discussing their home lives individually and show they listen to what staff say. They listen well when staff give instructions and to stories when together as a group. During some group activities, however, children become impatient and restless, as staff are unprepared.

Children enjoy planned activities to help them learn about the world around them. They know their runner beans need water and light to grow. They learn about cycle and foot paths, when taking walks in the nursery locality, matching road signs to those on the paths. They look carefully at signs, recognising an 'H' as being at the start of a friend's name and hearing that this stands for a fire hydrant too. These activities extend children's vocabularies well and positive interaction from staff encourages them to think. They are asked, "What happens when a fire-engine runs out of water?", for example. In these situations, children make quick strides in their learning but not all children may participate in such activities.

Since the last inspection, staff have begun to evaluate activities and have had training in assessment processes, including observation techniques. A new system of recording children's progress has been introduced and staff begin to understand how this links to the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage. Overall, planning is not yet closely linked to what children need to learn next, although some progress has been made.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection and, overall, they behave well. This is because children experience more interesting, 'hands on' activities and enjoy what they do. At times, however, adult-led activities are over-long and not well matched to children's levels so they become bored and restless. This is also true of some of the 'free play' activities set out for the older children. Here, activities such as sand-play, are presented in the same way through the week so that children lose interest in them.

Children learn to care for their environment. Two-year-olds, for example, help to sweep up when it is time to pack away and get ready for lunch. Older children help lay tables and pour drinks. They understand too that they help to pack away resources.

Children enter the nursery eagerly and settle quickly. Older children greet their friends. Relationships between the older children and staff are warm and respectful. Children receive much one to one attention, which helps support all children, including any who may have special needs. Staff treat children equally and give them equal attention. Children learn about the diversity of the world around them through using resources which reflect it; two-year-olds bath both black and white dolls, for example. Older children learn about different festivals, such as Easter and Mother's Day. They grow plants and wonder at tiny creatures they see when outside. In this way, they learn about themselves, others and the variety of the world so that their

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents receive detailed information about the nursery before their children start, although some policies require updating. Parents appreciate the newly introduced newsletters, which detail special events and activities in the nursery. Many parents exchange information with staff on a daily basis about their children's care needs so that these are catered for appropriately. An effective new assessment system, for children under three years of age, tracks their progress clearly. It is easy to follow and provides parents with accurate details of their children's development and achievements. The system put in place for older, funded children, records their progress too but parents do not receive a clear summary of this information.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery manager, who had taken up her new position only shortly before the last inspection, is having a significant impact on the care and education provided by this nursery. Good progress has been made on the action plan, which was drawn up to address the issues highlighted at the last inspection. All staff have personal development plans with targets to meet. Training, both in-house and external, receives a high priority. Many staff appreciate this and respond well. Several new appointments have been made. Proper induction procedures are in place. There remains, however, a lack of appropriately qualified staff working with the older children, which has an impact on their learning. Some staff working with younger children lack a thorough understanding of child development, which results in inappropriate expectations of them.

Staff morale has increased. Staff state they have a fuller understanding of the nursery's health and safety policies and procedures. This has raised the quality of children's care throughout the nursery. Many new resources have been provided resulting in improved provision for the children. The manager and her deputy - who provides effective support - provide good role models to the other staff, with their enthusiasm and knowledge. The manager has introduced events and activities to help build staff relationships and team working. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery education are good. Staff training needs have been identified and are being addressed through a training programme. All staff are expected to attend regular staff meetings and contribute to them. They are required to contribute to the planning and evaluation process in order to help develop their understanding of the Foundation Stage and take responsibility for what they offer the children. Their knowledge has improved since the last inspection but further training is required, including a thorough understanding of the principles which underpin the Foundation Stage. As a result of the improvements in planning and evaluation, children now experience a broad curriculum. There remains an imbalance in the way it is delivered, however, with insufficient outdoor learning, an overly strict timetable which interrupts children's play and little encouragement for children to

become independent learners. Nevertheless, children now experience some interesting and well planned activities to which they respond well. The manager intends to introduce a more unified approach to planning once staff are more familiar and confident with the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage. The senior management team of the nursery and Just Learning Ltd., is well aware of these shortcomings and has suitable strategies in place to address them.

Improvements since the last inspection

Care

Following the last inspection, the nursery was asked to address five recommendations. These related to babies having more opportunities for fresh air, developing independence skills, behaviour management and developing progress records. The nursery produced an effective action plan which has addressed all these issues. As a result, the care of the children has improved.

Nursery education

At the last inspection, the quality of the nursery education was judged as inadequate. The nursery was asked to address three actions to improve the quality of education offered to children funded for nursery education. The nursery produced an effective action plan which has begun to address the issues raised. As a result, the quality of nursery education has improved and children now receive a broad range of experiences.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- ensure adult-led activities suit children's stage of development, making use of appropriate guidance (also applies to Nursery Education)
- ensure all children have equal access to the experiences offered (also applies to Nursery Education)

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 increase staff knowledge of the Foundation Stage and the principles which underpin it
- use assessment of children's progress to inform planning for their future learning, both indoors and outdoors
- develop staff questioning techniques in order to help children learn and to provide a positive role-model.

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