



Townhouse Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY314152
Inspection date	03 April 2006
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting Address	80 Lawton Road, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST7 2DB
Telephone number	01270 883383
E-mail	
Registered person	Townhouse Childcare 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?

Town House Kindergarten is one of two nurseries owned and run by the provider. It opened under the previous owner in 1994 and operates from a large converted house in the centre of Alsager. Children have access to their individual group rooms on the ground floor and access to rooms on the first floor for various other activities and meals. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play-area.

A maximum of 31 children may attend the kindergarten at any one time. The

kindergarten is open each weekday from 07.45 until 18.00 for 52 weeks of the year, with the exception of Bank Holidays.

There are currently 52 children aged from 0 to under 5 years on-roll. Of these, 17 children receive funding for nursery education. The kindergarten supports children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The kindergarten employs 15 members of staff, including additional support from qualified swimming, French and primary teachers. There are 13 staff who work directly with the children, 12 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The kindergarten has access to a Foundation Stage teacher and other advisory staff from Sure Start Cheshire. The setting has been awarded 'Quality Counts' status.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy because practitioners employ a thorough knowledge of appropriate health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, staff vigilantly ensure that children wash hands, blow noses, keep warm and protect their clothes with suitable aprons. Good nappy changing procedures are routinely used in the baby room where evaporating antibacterial liquid wash is also used. Some three and four year olds know that they wash their hands to get germs off, but staff do not sufficiently support the development of good bodily awareness. This is because they are not talking to children about this regularly through the routines of the day. Children also cannot reach tissues from the dispenser in the dining room to manage their own nose blowing. As a result, children's independence in self-care is underdeveloped.

Most staff are trained in first aid and / or food hygiene. They follow clear written sickness procedures and keep parents well informed about childhood illnesses and diseases. Rigorous systems ensure that parents give detailed consent and staff make full records for all medicines administered. Accidents are also properly recorded with parent signatures of acknowledgement each time. These procedures help to protect children's health.

Children can rest and sleep according to their individual needs because there is a designated sleep room with cots and mattresses which can be used whenever sleeps are required. This has a closed circuit television camera to allow children to be monitored from all base rooms. Regular physical checks of sleeping children are also made.

Children enjoy adequate physical activity indoors using music and movement sessions. Outside, the designated play area comprises a paved area and a soft surface under the climbing frame and see-saws. The play equipment and ground around are rather dirty because no staff members have particular responsibility to

clean this area. Nevertheless, it is regularly used so that children enjoy a variety of free play and organised games which nurtures children's physical skills, including their sense of space and ability to control their bodies. For example, a simple game of snakes and ladders has been chalked onto the paved area today and children roll a large dice to see which square to move to. Afterwards they play on the tricycles, climbing frame, slide and see saw.

Children are very well nourished and enjoy a healthy balanced diet because there is a new and varied menu. Food is bought fresh and prepared from scratch, using many items which are organically grown. Children eat well and many have seconds and thirds. Staff are well organised, preparing snacks efficiently and sitting with children, but they do not involve 3 and 4-year-olds enough in laying table, serving and clearing. Children enjoy the social aspect of mealtimes and can talk amongst themselves and with staff. However, they are not increasing their independence around eating and preparation of meals and are not talking enough about what they are eating and why. Nevertheless, there are other food tasting opportunities as part of the curriculum where children can try foods from around the world.

Children have access to water at all times. Drinks are now water or milk only, and a teeth cleaning regime is to start shortly. This supports the oral health promotion which the nursery is following in conjunction with the health authority. Children have any special health and dietary needs met because practitioners work well with parents to elicit any information about these at the beginning of placement through enrolment forms. An allergy representative on the staff ensures that everyone is aware of the details of all food preferences and allergies so that none are overlooked.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, bright, secure and safe environment. Each home room is well organised and comfortable, with toilets or nappy changing areas off so that children move around the setting with confidence. This welcoming accommodation is well used by experienced staff to successfully promote children's emotional wellbeing because areas are homely, adequately labelled and stimulating. There are interesting activity areas, posters, and some low-level displays to capture children's interest and imagination.

There is excellent security to the only public entrance door. It has closed circuit television and a keypad system, so that only registered parents and staff can get into the building. A signing in book is used by all parents and a password system is used for any different people coming to collect children. Staff also liaise well with the supernumerary manager to ensure that staff ratios are kept at proper levels even when there are visitors to the nursery. Staff are also vigilant to ensure that children move about safely within the setting and with increasing responsibility for themselves. For example, toddlers are escorted slowly up and down the stairs on their bottoms or one step at a time. Likewise, pre-school children do not run, they put chairs back under tables, and they sit on their bottoms so that they don't tread on others.

Children use innovative and stimulating resources which are clean and purchased

from reputable sources. These resources contribute significantly to children's enjoyment and achievement and are well set out for children to access easily. For example, babies watch the bubble maker and the light diffusing ball. They also feel the different textures of items in the treasure box, the soft toys and play mats. Pre-school children use the office corner, farm, Lego and model dinosaurs during free play. Resources are mostly kept in storage boxes in low open shelf units which are labelled with pictures to aid children with tidying up.

Children are secure and well supervised throughout the day because staff ratios are high and staff are vigilant. They keep areas clean, dry and safe, making full use of socket covers, safety gates, closed circuit camera screens, and radiator covers. In addition they regularly practise the emergency escape route and procedure, with the babies safely moved using escape cots on wheels. This proficiently ensures children's safety in an emergency situation. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly by the safety representative on staff. These provide a basis for action and demonstrate what measures are in place for special activities, such as use of the mini-bus, swimming lessons, and walking trips to the local library and ponds. Parent consents are also obtained for these activities. Electrical appliances, gas, electrical installations and fire equipment are checked and serviced as required. Children's safety is assured as a result of all these measures.

Children are adequately protected from abuse because all staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection. The named staff member for child protection and some other staff have been on recent child protection training. However, staff do not always record all the previous injuries which children come in with. Children's safety is not assured if there is no documentation of a developing pattern which may culminate in a child protection concern. Nevertheless, staff know who to contact if they are concerned about a child and are aware of what to do in the event of an allegation being made against them. They display up-to-date reference information about child protection and the policy is given in detail in the parent policy brochure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Babies and toddlers are developing a high level of confidence and self-esteem because staff talk and listen to them, and have high expectations of what they can achieve. As a result they separate well from their carers and go to play without prompting, using activity centres, feely toys and construction toys. Pre-school children all sit together for register and discuss the calendar and weather and all join in together to do music and movement games. Children of all ages confidently approach staff and communicate their needs and concerns. For example, pre-school children ask for seconds of their lunch and babies look to staff and smile when they want to stack the coloured pots up again.

Children are happy, settled, and interested in what they are doing because staff are committed, enthusiastic and work well together as a team. They put children into small groups for many activities, such as outside play and craft-work, so that they

receive sufficient help and direction to make the most of the activity. Children are able to persist in activities which truly interest them. For example, toddlers listen attentively to stories because staff tell them with drama and flair, involving children and capturing their imagination.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are good because staff know children well and know what they can do. For example, toddlers are acquiring new knowledge and language skills as they receive one-to-one time using toys and cards to name objects and body parts. Babies' senses are stimulated and they are acquiring more control of their bodies as they watch and follow the falling bubbles from the bubble maker and move to try to catch them. Staff in the baby and toddler rooms make excellent use of the Birth to three matters framework to plan and deliver a full range of activities to develop children in all areas. They keep lively and detailed photo and written evidence records of the activities undertaken. These enable parents to see how these activities are contributing to their child's learning.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere; a varied programme of activities covering all six areas of learning; and an approach which fosters good relationships, self-confidence and good social behaviour. Children enjoy a fine range of activity areas within their base room. Role play, reading, construction, craft and experimental areas are set up at all times.

Children's development in each of the six areas of learning is sound. This development is supported by varied resources and a well planned environment. Staff have wide ranging ideas for physical play and use music and stories to good effect. Theme weeks ensure that emphasis is placed upon use of computers, cookery, science and music over each month. However, there is under-use of role play, dressing-up, reading and craft areas during free play time. This is because staff do not question, challenge and join in enough to fully extend children's play. Children also have few opportunities to discuss the session, the purpose of activities and how they link to the current theme. This means that children ask few questions, cannot make sufficient links in their play and activities and therefore do not maximise their learning potential.

Children understand what behaviour is expected of them and are making satisfactory progress in most areas of learning. This is because staff are successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development. Staff know each child well and encourage friendships between them, so that they know about one another and consider one another. For example, they know who is the tallest and who is what age, and they listen to one another's news in circle-time. This underpins children's ability to learn because it gives them great self-confidence and a desire to learn new skills.

Staff usually present activities to children in a way that truly interests them and helps them to focus, persist and resist distraction. For example, a nursery teacher offers weekly sessions for rising fives and helps these children to develop their mathematical and literacy skills in particular. The progress of all funded children is

best when staff lead during group or individual activities. For example, children develop language, communication and listening skills as they are led in circle-time. They are given chances to talk to all the group about their news. Staff question and support this, making sure that everybody listens, has a chance to participate, and answer questions to increase their understanding. Equally, individual children improve their small motor skills, calculate, and gain improving understanding of measure and planning as they work one to one with staff to create a design with interlocking wheels.

Children make satisfactory progress because staff have a thorough understanding of the Foundation Stage and an appreciation of how young children learn. Their medium and long term activity planning is according to termly themes. It is written in a way which explains how activities support the stepping stones to the early learning goals. However, daily activity plans are not in place and, as a consequence, there is little direction for the activities undertaken during the day. Staff regularly evaluate the outcomes from activities undertaken and complete individual profiles on each child, which show when stepping stones have been achieved. However, staff are not dating or using examples to bring these records to life and are not clearly adapting their plans to meet each child's specific needs for their next steps.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children join in well, take responsibility and play a productive part in the setting because the warm environment and friendly, purposeful staff help children feel at home from the outset. Children are greeted along with their parents. Older children start the day by finding their name card and then selecting activities from those laid out ready to use. All aspects of the sessions then promote children's sense of belonging and responsibility for themselves and others as they play. For example, children are given special responsibility to select an area for tidying up and then choose two friends to assist with this.

Children are helped to consider and value diversity because there are various books, dressing-up costumes, dolls, musical instruments, play figures, and games which show positive images of culture and special need. Activities using food tasting, photos, newspapers and role play have successfully brought festivals and saints' days to life for children. Posters or pictures are also used, which show people from other cultures and key words in various languages.

Children's individual needs are met well because staff skilfully make individual plans and use their time to encourage children with concentration, behaviour, language or other particular needs to join in with group activities. Staff model appropriate play skills, and use short and simple language. They make it easier for children to conform by warmly praising wanted cooperation and ignoring non-participation as much as possible. Staff also make special arrangements to ensure that high achieving children continue to build on their progress by planning for them to undertake activities with older children.

Children with special needs are included fully in the life of the setting because there

is space for easy movement. Adults are committed to inclusion and are enthusiastic about continuing to keep up-to-date by undertaking relevant training. They liaise well with parents and relevant professionals to ensure that they plan and work together using recognised and consistent techniques which benefit children with special needs. Regular assessments and evaluations are thoroughly conducted to ensure that children who have particular needs make as much progress as possible and are taught in the most effective way.

Children behave well and work harmoniously together because staff are vigilant and teach children how to behave well and consider others. Good manners are taught and expected from pre-school children. Staff use pieces of music to signify tidy-up-time and make use of rhymes to instigate good listening. They generously praise children when they clear up properly, sit well for group-time, or await their turn. Children know what behaviour is expected of them and confidently go to staff for help to resolve disputes when they occur. Kindness to our friends in nursery and outside is clearly promoted because staff remind children that this is the behaviour that is wanted. Stickers are given for especially good behaviour.

There are good behaviour, equal opportunities, parent partnership and special needs policies. However, there are different methods used to record behaviour issues and incidents, with individual incidents not always being recorded until a clear problem with behaviour has become evident. There is also some lack of understanding about incidents of physical intervention. This inconsistency results in a lack of clarity when dealing with children's problems and makes it difficult to act quickly to resolve them effectively with parents' help.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Children receive consistency of care between the home and nursery because staff communicate well with parents. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the care and education from the nursery. Staff are flexible, interested and make time to speak to parents. For example, they give extra feedback when there are changes to a child's routine and allow parents to use the nursery menu on varying days and supply food themselves on others. Parents of babies and toddlers receive written daily feedback sheets detailing their child's day.

Parents have regular opportunities to verbally share their own expectations and their child's routines and starting points with a key worker. In addition, written reports of their child's progress are made available alongside evidence of work and profiles which are regularly completed. Newsletters keep parents well informed about the Birth to three matters framework, activities in each home room, staffing, special news, menus and fund raising events. However, information about the pre-school educational programme is not given or displayed, so that parents have little appreciation of the curriculum which their pre-school child is following. They also do not have many ways to be meaningfully involved in their child's learning at home.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered adequately.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Recruitment and vetting procedures work well to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by suitable staff with qualifications in childcare. This ensures a consistent and skilled team to work with children. Staff are given good opportunities to improve their knowledge by attending courses and workshops because relief staff cover is planned. Staff use this knowledge very effectively to provide children with a wide range of learning experiences. For example, they all have first aid qualifications and many have undertaken courses on the Birth to three matters framework, the Foundation Stage, special educational needs, child protection, behaviour and safety.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The nursery manager and registered person provide good support to the pre-school room leader and the teaching and care staff. Supervision, appraisals and time spent in the pre-school room by the manager ensure that the pre-school is monitored well. Staff continue to have very clear sense of purpose and are motivated to provide a high quality setting which staff and children are proud of. Solid and supportive relationships are developed with all staff so that together they provide an inclusive environment where every child matters. Although the managers have not identified shortcomings in the daily delivery of the curriculum seen during inspection, they are committed to facilitating improvements wherever possible. This will improve the outcomes for children's learning in all areas.

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 staff work cooperatively together to effectively support each child. Staff are specialised in behaviour, child protection, special needs and safety, and share these responsibilities well. Staff are vigilant and have a clear sense of purpose as they spread their observation, assistance and support to all the children attending. They are successful at motivating and enhancing children's enjoyment and social skills.

Policies and procedures work well in practice to promote children's enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. For example, child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given and policies are clear and appropriate, detailing the principles and practices of the setting. Registers and signing-in books are accurate at all times and are reliable in the event of an emergency. Children's records are completed regularly so that profiles and reports are up-to-date. Good organisation ensures that the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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 satisfactory.

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 pre-school children learn about healthy living and good hygiene, and that they develop their independence in all aspects of self care, especially at meal times
- ensure that incidents involving behaviour management, physical intervention, previous injuries or child protection are recorded consistently, so that children are protected and parents are kept informed where appropriate.

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):

- ensure that staff plan daily activities which provide children with opportunities to cover Stepping Stones within all the Areas of Learning and ensure that staff maximise children's learning through questions, challenge and participation
- ensure that records give a clear picture of progress and that assessments are used to help individual children to move to the next stage in their learning
- ensure that parents receive more detailed information about the educational programme and that they are encouraged to become more involved in their child's learning at home.

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