



Secret Garden Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY287497
Inspection date	13 October 2005
Inspector	Sue Davey
Setting Address	The Barns, Elms Farm, Brinsea Road, Congresbury, North Somerset, BS49 5JH
Telephone number	01934 853350
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Registered person	Stefanie Jayne Metcalfe
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?

Secret Garden Nursery has been open for 10 years and changed ownership in 2004. The nursery operates from a converted barn on Elms Farm in Congresbury. It comprises five playrooms plus associated facilities. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. A maximum of 52 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 throughout the year.

Currently there are 67 children aged from birth to five years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local community and surrounding villages. The nursery employs ten staff to work directly with the children. All staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 3. In addition there are two regular relief staff and a cook. The setting receives support from an advisory teacher from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is well safeguarded by the effective policies and procedures carried out by all staff. Regular and thorough cleaning programmes minimise the spread of infection and if children are ill or infectious, they do not attend until well again. Children from a very young age practise good basic hygiene routines. Consequently, older children understand the need to wash their hands after using the toilet and before meals. Staff talk to parents about children's individual needs to make sure they are cared for appropriately. For instance, staff follow the personal feeding and sleep routines of babies. Little ones who need to sleep or rest are able to do so in peace and quiet. All meals and snacks are prepared freshly on the premises to a very high standard. They provide children with a healthy and balanced diet that takes good account of their individual dietary needs. Records show that matters regarding children's health and wellbeing are clearly documented and meet regulatory requirements.

All children have regular and frequent opportunities to play outside in the fresh air. They enjoy the space and freedom to run, jump, climb and pedal or scoot wheeled toys. Suitable equipment encourages them to develop various skills such as, throwing, catching and kicking a ball, balancing on low-level blocks and rolling hoops. Babies and children go on regular country walks in the immediate vicinity. Inside, children have space for energetic play such as parachute games and moving to music. Many enjoy the additional movement sessions with visiting specialists. Babies have space to roll, stretch, and crawl. They are encouraged to practise their first tentative steps under the watchful eye of caring and supportive staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Babies and children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe environment. The outside play areas are fully enclosed and children cannot leave the premises unattended. Staff are very aware of potential hazards and take appropriate action to minimise risks to children. They regularly carry out drills to practise emergency evacuation of the building. Children know the routine well and happily cooperate to make a timely exit. All toys and equipment are safe and suitable for their purpose. Children can see what there is to play with and they access resources safely. They learn to be aware of dangers and understand certain safety rules, such as the colour

sequence of traffic lights and the knowledge that only green means 'go'. Staff supervise children well. They encourage children's independence according to their level of maturity. For example, older children learn to walk carefully up and down the stairs to their unit whereas safety gates are in place at the rear of the building, to prevent toddlers from having accidents. Children do not have access to the kitchen. Many staff hold appropriate first aid certificates and know how to deal with accidents.

The implementation of sound policies and procedures help to protect children.

For instance, all necessary checks are made when new staff are appointed. Visitors and students are always supervised and children are only released to adults named and authorised by parents to collect the child on their behalf. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection issues and know when and where to seek advice if concerns arise.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Throughout the nursery, children and babies are happy, settled and well cared for. The keyworker system ensures continuity of care and staff know the children well. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan activities and make sure babies have every opportunity to develop and thrive. However, this framework is not used for all children under three years. Babies and toddlers enjoy very good relationships with the staff and the consistent daily routine adds to their overall feelings of security. They take part in a wide range of activities that stimulate their senses and they enjoy exploring the toys and materials provided. Craft and cooking activities are popular and often link to the nursery topic. However, this is sometimes tokenistic and not always relevant to the children's level of understanding. These youngest children are gaining confidence and learning to accept the needs of others in their group. Staff talk, read and sing with children to support their language development. They provide resources to encourage imaginative play and walks to see the chickens introduce them to the world of nature. Older children also benefit from the close relationships they have with staff. Their transition through the nursery is well managed to meet their individual needs and level of confidence.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff make resources available and plan activities to cover all areas of learning. A range of topics introduce children to new experiences and one to one or small group discussions helps to embed their learning. However, plans are not based on what children need to learn next and there are few links with assessment and planning. Staff work closely with children and join in with their play. They encourage them to try new activities and talk to them about what they are doing. Most children are confident speakers. They talk about home experiences, enjoy listening to stories and independently choose to look at books. Some children take part in weekly French lessons. Children recognise their own name in print and practise their early writing skills in meaningful situations such as role-play. Some children can form recognisable letter shapes associated with their name. Children have a concept of number and count by rote up to ten and beyond.

They recognise simple shapes through group games and at teatime when they cut their sandwiches into triangles, rectangles or squares. Children use mathematical language in their play such as big, small, longer, more and less. They experience quantity and volume by tipping and pouring water or sand, and cooking activities give them an understanding of weight and measure.

Children learn about the world around them through a range of topics and events. Many planned activities require children to follow a set of instructions to achieve an end result, this is often craft based. Children enjoy building models to their own design with construction toys and recycled boxes. However, there is little access to technology and few opportunities to experiment and discover how things work. Topics incorporate seasonal activities and various cultural festivals. In this way, children gain an awareness of change and development throughout the year. On a day-to-day basis, the consistent routine gives them a sense of time. For example, while playing in the garden a child said, "When we go inside it's time for a drink". Children enjoy a range of art and craft activities. They paint and draw freely as well as producing articles for structured wall displays. They cut and stick with different materials, although the range is somewhat limited. They knead, roll, pinch and squeeze malleable materials such as playdough and carefully position small world figures such as animals, people and trains. Consequently, as children develop their creative skills they also improve their manual dexterity, which leads to good pencil control. Music and singing are regular features of the week. Children join in with familiar songs and play various instruments. They work as a group, for instance, to practise for the Christmas play when they enjoy dressing up and performing for their parents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are fully included in the nursery. They take part in a wide range of non-stereotyped activities and their own choice of playthings is respected. A number of books, toys and posters portray positive images of the diverse society in which we live today. Staff read stories, sing songs and provide activities to help children accept and appreciate other people's needs and differences. There is good support for children with special needs. Staff regularly discuss children's progress with parents and if necessary, other professionals such as physiotherapists, speech therapists or health visitors. Children play independently and in small and large groups. They are interested and well motivated. They persevere at a task and show good concentration skills. For example, a child repeatedly stacked and sorted a graded maths toy until all pieces fitted correctly. He looked very pleased with his achievement. Children are well behaved in response to staff's consistent and positive approach. Staff throughout the nursery are kind, understanding and supportive. They respond to children appropriately depending on each one's level of maturity. For instance, distraction techniques are used with very young children not yet capable of sharing whereas older children are encouraged to talk about the problems they encounter through play and find mutually acceptable solutions. Children are well mannered, helpful and learning to take turns and share. A short 'time out' may be given if negative behaviour disrupts other children's play. Overall, children's spiritual,

moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The nursery's partnership with parents is good. Staff are friendly and approachable. They obtain detailed information from parents so that children are cared for according to their wishes. They talk to parents every day and provide good feedback when children are collected. Children benefit from the good relationship between staff and parents as it helps them to feel secure. Parents receive clear information about the setting and curriculum prior to placement. Newsletters and notice boards keep them up to date with current and future events. Each unit displays their daily routine and activity plans to show parents how their child spends their time in nursery. Parents are welcome to visit nursery and share any skills or interests with the children. They are encouraged to attend parents evenings held twice a year but are free to discuss their child's progress at any time. Staff take photographs of children at play and they prepare written assessments to share with parents. This enables parents to take an active role in their child's education. The manager and staff take any concerns seriously and work with parents to resolve issues as they arise.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children feel safe and secure in this well organised nursery. Effective procedures help to ensure children's continued good health and wellbeing. The organisation of staff and grouping of children provides continuity of care and a seamless transition from room to room, as children develop. The daily routines reflect the needs of children in different age groups. They include time for free and more structured activities, outside play and time to rest or sleep. Separate French, dance and music sessions are offered if parents wish it. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Written policies and procedures are readily available and all staff are familiar with them. All regulatory documentation is up to date. However, some policies do not reflect current practice and refer to the service provided by the previous owner. Recruitment procedures are rigorous and staff are vetted carefully to make sure they are suitable to work with young children. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is a strong commitment to personal development throughout the nursery. Staff attend regular meetings to discuss concerns, feedback new ideas raised at training and suggest ways to improve practice. For instance, following a recent training event, staff have drawn up plans to develop the outside areas.

Leadership and management of nursery education are satisfactory. The manager spends time on a regular basis in the pre-school unit. She supports staff to implement new ideas and discusses topics with them. Staff meet together to plan activities and various events throughout the year. However, current systems of planning and assessment do not help them to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration Ofsted has received two complaints relating to National Standards 2: Organisation; Standard 6: Safety and Standard 7: Health. The complaints referred to staff ratios and turnover; and cleaning and nappy changing procedures. We visited unannounced to investigate the complaints. Through checking documentation, observation and general discussion, the inspector found that staffing ratios meet the National standards. The staffing situation had stabilised since the new manager took up post in February 2005. The inspector was also satisfied with the procedures for cleaning and nappy changing. However, an action was raised regarding the supervision of new staff until all checks are completed. The nursery responded promptly to this action and we are satisfied that all National Standards are now being met.

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):

- develop planning of activities and assessment of children under three years in line with Birth to three matters
- update policies and procedures to reflect current practice under new management structure.

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):

- develop planning and assessment to identify the next steps in children's learning and provide activities accordingly
- provide more experiences for children to experiment and find out by doing.

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