



Just Learning Southwell Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | EY259506 |
| Inspection date | 17 July 2006 |
| Inspector | Katherine Powell / Janice Broddle |
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| 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

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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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Just Learning Southwell Day Nursery is part of a chain of nurseries run throughout the country by Just Learning Ltd. The nursery opened in 1996, but was taken over by the present owners in 2003. It operates from a purpose built building, which is situated in the town of Southwell, Nottinghamshire. A maximum of 37 children may

attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00 for 52 weeks of the year, closing for main bank holidays only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 97 children from 12 weeks to 4 years on roll. Of these 14 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The nursery employs ten staff. Seven of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance, and receives support from a teacher advisor at the Local Education Authority. The nursery was awarded the Pre-School Learning Alliance accreditation in 2002.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in an environment where staff maintain satisfactory levels of cleanliness and comfortable temperatures. There are some routines in place that help to reduce the risk of possible spread of infection, for example, staff vigilantly implement nappy changing and meal serving policies. However, this is compromised for babies due to the current sleeping arrangements, as they do not have separate linen or an identified sleeping place. Additionally, the arrangements do not enable all babies to lie flat which poses a possible risk to their health. Children begin to gain an understanding of personal hygiene through daily routines and effective adult support. They know to wash their hands after engaging in messy activities and before meals. Appropriate first aid equipment is in place along with an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff. Clear sick child and administration of medication policies help to ensure that children who are unwell can be adequately looked after. Required documents to promote children's health and welfare are all in place.

Children enjoy a range of meals and snacks which are cooked on the premises and mainly use fresh ingredients. Meals include a broad variety of raw and cooked fruit and vegetables and children are beginning to learn about healthy eating through planned activities and discussions with staff. They are provided with regular drinks during the day and water is freely accessible. Staff meet children's specific dietary needs well, due to the effective systems in place to monitor this.

Young children access fresh air and exercise through scheduled daily times outdoors where they are beginning to learn to control their bodies by playing on a range of equipment such as bicycles and climbing apparatus. Staff work effectively with parents to ensure that young babies are able to rest and sleep according to their individual needs and in line with home routines.

Pre-school children are developing their small hand skills through the use of tools and equipment such as pencils, bead threading, paint brushes, jigsaws and construction toys. Children use equipment such as the computer mouse with good

control and co-ordination and most children persevere when using knives at meal times. Children enjoy moving freely and spontaneously and benefit from regular opportunities to get fresh air when playing outside. They learn how to safely negotiate their way around toys and equipment both indoors and outdoors. Physical activities are not sufficiently planned to ensure that children practise a variety of skills when playing outside. Children do not have regular use of appropriate equipment to promote and extend their climbing skills and there are limited opportunities for children to access balancing equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are looked after in a welcoming and well-maintained environment. Staff carry out relevant daily routines to ensure that children's play areas are safe and the risk of accidents minimised. For example, they conduct a morning risk assessment of the premises, and throughout the day, monitor toys and equipment to ensure that they are safe for children to play with. Children are therefore able to move around safely and independently.

Children are kept safe and secure because there is a secure entry system in place along with adequate systems to ensure that only known adults can collect children at home time and monitoring of visitors to the nursery. Procedures are in place to ensure that children attending before and after school are safe when dropping at, and collecting from school. Appropriate fire precautions are in place and children develop a good awareness of fire safety issues through regularly practising emergency evacuation procedures.

Children's welfare is satisfactorily promoted because staff are familiar with the setting's policies and procedures regarding child protection. Senior staff are clear of their responsibilities and have appropriate contact numbers on hand.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Children settle well at the nursery due to the flexible settling-in procedures which enable parents to stay until children are happy for them to leave. Staff gather a good level of information from parents. This assists them in getting to know the children and benefits young babies as staff establish routines that are consistent with their experiences at home. Staff are beginning to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework when providing activities for some children aged under three years. However, they do not use children's development records to inform planning, therefore, they do not base activities on the needs of the children attending. Many activities and experiences are inappropriate, therefore children have little interest in them because they are not well-enough matched to their stages of development. For some children, this is because they are working within an inappropriate curriculum. Children's disinterest in activities provided impacts on their behaviour, which deteriorates as their interest wanes. Staff then put considerable effort into

supervising behaviour rather than interacting positively with the children and promoting learning.

The baby and toddler room have appropriate, stimulating toys which encourage children to explore using all their senses, but the structured organisation of daily routines means that children have limited opportunities to access their play materials. When able, babies shake rattles, look at themselves in mirrors and feel the texture of paint. Adults engage with these children, sitting alongside them on the floor, talking and singing with them to encourage language skills. A lack of domestic-style furniture in the baby room though, limits opportunities for babies who are learning to walk, to move around the furniture safely and continue normal home experiences. Some experiences for the children in the toddler room are good. They enjoy some periods of time when they are able to dress up using a selection of different textured materials, explore the texture of sand and paint and participate in story sessions using props to bring the story to life. However, the current routines within the nursery do not provide children with a stimulating and purposeful day that has sufficient regard to their developmental stage. The day is overly structured and children are directed to activities regardless of their wishes. They have minimal opportunities to select and make choices in their play, nor do they have the opportunity to initiate play ideas themselves. Some children attend after they have attended full time school. These children do not have opportunities to make choices. They join the structured session in the pre-school room, such as story time and children are often disinterested in the activities and not fully engaged.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Most staff working with children in receipt of nursery funding do not have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage to plan a suitable range of activities. Consequently, children make limited progress towards the early learning goals. Although plans are in place to show how the six areas of learning are promoted, staff often do not follow these and activities are not well matched to children's individual needs or starting points. Staff know children well and regularly observe and assess children's progress along the stepping stones. However, assessments are not effective as staff do not consistently record information or use these to plan the next steps in children's learning. The organisation and delivery of some whole group activities is not successful in engaging children's interest or encouraging them to participate co-operatively. Activities are mainly adult-directed which results in children having insufficient opportunities to make choices about their play and learning and they are not able to freely select from a wide range of toys or resources within the room. There is an emphasis on monitoring and supervising activities rather than teaching and staff do not question and challenge children sufficiently.

Some children are beginning to develop their own friendship groups and mainly play co-operatively together. They approach adults with confidence and seek support when needed. Some children become engrossed in the games, for example when engaging in play dough or role play activities. However, children do not move freely between different play areas or frequently select their own activities or resources. Children learn to take care of their personal needs, such as pouring their own drinks and getting a tissue to blow their nose. Children enjoy communicating with others and

have opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills during circle time. However, due to the organisation of these activities some children find it difficult to sustain their concentration and contribute appropriately. A few children select books independently but their enjoyment is restricted due to the lack of a comfortable reading area within the room. Children have access to some resources to make marks, for example crayons, pencils and an easel. Some children are able to write their names, however, they do not often attempt to write spontaneously as opportunities are mainly adult-directed and do not engage their interest. Children have insufficient opportunities to write purposefully during play activities, such as role play games. Children can see print displayed around the room and some are developing their awareness that print carries meaning. For example, children read their name cards and see labels on toy boxes. Children count in order to at least ten and older children are developing an awareness of larger numbers. They use some mathematical language to describe and compare sizes, shapes and position. However, insufficient attention is given to increasing children's understanding of number, calculation, shape and measurement through practical activities and daily routines. The skills of older and more able children are not extended through appropriate questioning.

Children use their senses to observe and describe natural resources. For example, children carefully studied a variety of shells using a magnifying glass and they talked with interest about the different features and appearance. However, weak planning does not ensure that all children gain the most from these learning opportunities as staff do not support children effectively. Children begin to build with construction toys and have some opportunities to use the computer to develop their awareness of Information Technology. Children enjoy talking about events in their own lives, such as starting school and going on holiday. They have opportunities to develop their awareness of diversity within society through some planned activities and discussions. Children develop their small hand skills when playing with dough and doing threading activities, however, outdoor activities are not planned effectively to fully promote children's whole body movements. Children are not able to freely access a wide range of tools or materials to express their ideas creatively or imaginatively. Some children use their imaginations when engaging in role play activities but on occasions this is limited due to a lack of adult input and the available props to support their play. Most children enjoy singing familiar songs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Children's sense of belonging is encouraged through photographs and displays of their work presented attractively around the setting. There is an equal opportunities policy in place and appropriate systems to ensure that staff are aware of children's individual routines. Children begin to learn about the wider world through structured activities and the celebration of festivals. However, not all staff are familiar enough with the equal opportunities policy to effectively support this. There are limited toys and resources that promote positive images of differences within society, and children do not have free access to these as they are mainly explored only during adult-directed activities.

There are systems in place to identify children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and staff adapt activities to promote their inclusion. However, the recent re-organisation of staff, along with insufficient systems for supporting inexperienced staff in monitoring individual children's progress, mean that children are not adequately supported to reach identified targets. Children's spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is fostered as children work and play together co-operatively and confidently join in conversations. They are learning right from wrong and generally behave well within the nursery. Staff mainly act as good role models, using praise and encouragement, which helps to promote children's confidence and self esteem. However, the strict regimentation of daily routines for young children causes their behaviour to deteriorate as they lose interest in activities and staff occasionally show a lack of understanding and sensitivity to their needs and wishes. Consequently, some children become distressed and unhappy at these times.

Children's wellbeing is promoted by the friendly relationships that staff develop with parents. Parents have access to policies and procedures, and receive regular newsletters, keeping them well informed about practices and current issues within the setting. Staff maintain daily diaries for younger children which keep parents fully up to date on children's daily activities and routines and there are effective systems in place for parents to ensure staff are aware of changes. The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is satisfactory. These parents receive information regarding forthcoming topics through regular newsletters, although activity plans are not displayed within the setting. Some information is provided for parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff are always available to share information informally with parents when they bring and collect children. In addition, the nursery holds formal events where parents are invited to come in to look at written records and discuss children's progress and development. However, not all parents have been able to attend these events and so, consequently, some parents have not had an opportunity to see and contribute towards their child's progress records.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Appropriate recruitment and selection procedures are in place, which ensure that staff are adequately vetted, qualified and suitable to work with children. There are some appropriate systems in place to support staff in understanding their roles and responsibilities; there is an induction programme, a satisfactory range of policies and procedures, and regular staff meetings take place. However, systems to ensure that they confidently and competently carry out their duties are not in place. For example, an annual appraisal is not reviewed until the following year; staff have limited opportunities to attend training courses to further develop their skills and knowledge; and some staff evidence a lack of knowledge of the content of some policies, which means that they are unable to implement them effectively. Insufficient thought and planning to recent changes within the staff team mean that some staff lack appropriate knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework or the Foundation Stage curriculum in order to be able to implement them effectively.

Most legally required records are in place, and are meticulously completed, containing a good level of detail. However, children's registers are not always kept up to date for children who are moving group rooms and records of staff attendance do not include details of which staff are caring for which children. Whilst adult to child ratios are maintained overall, there are periods some days when the deployment of staff, or staff pre-occupation with paperwork or preparing displays, has a detrimental impact on the care of the children.

Systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of care for children are not effective. The use of space within the nursery does not give priority to the quality of care for children. Current use of rooms means that pre-school children are not always able to go to the toilet when they need, and are not able to go independently. Babies are continually distracted due to older children accessing the bathroom, and sleeping babies are disturbed. The organisation of rooms means that some children are working within an inappropriate curriculum and activities are not appropriate to their level of development. The organisation of resources does not allow children to rest or relax if they wish because there is no space for them to do so. Additionally, opportunities for them to learn and develop their independence are impaired due to the organisation of toys, equipment and daily routines.

The leadership and management of nursery education is inadequate. Effective systems are not in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and children's learning and, as a result, areas for improvement and development are not identified. Recent staff changes have resulted in staff lacking sufficient knowledge and experience of planning and delivering the Foundation Stage curriculum effectively. This adversely affects children's learning and, overall, children's needs are not met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, one action was raised requiring the provider to ensure that adult:child ratios are met at all times.

The provider has now established a bank of staff who are available on a temporary basis to cover in the absence of the permanent staff.

At the last nursery education inspection four recommendations were raised. These related to developing staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum, involving all staff in planning the curriculum, extending activities to build on what children already know and can do and ensuring staff effectively support children's learning and extending resources to enable children to self-select activities such as sand play and designing and making.

Staff working within the pre-school do not have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They have received some in-house training with regard to planning the curriculum and receive some support from the nursery manager. However, planning is not secure and staff lack sufficient experience to plan the curriculum and deliver and support activities effectively. Not all staff are involved in planning the curriculum at present as they have only recently

started working in the pre-school room and lack appropriate training. The pre-school leader has completed a recognised childcare qualification but has not undertaken any further training as yet to support her with planning. Staff do not use children's assessments records effectively to plan the next stages in their learning. Therefore activities do not sufficiently extend or challenge children's knowledge and skills. Planning does not support staff working with children and therefore activities lack focus and clear learning intentions. Staff deployment is at times ineffective as staff do not work directly with children and consequently do not guide and extend their learning by asking questions or involving themselves in children's games. Children are not able to freely select from a wide range of practical activities or play resources. Activities are mainly adult directed and children are given very limited opportunities to make their own choices. Play resources are not organised effectively to promote free choice, and equipment such as the sand tray is not freely available at all times. Resources and tools to promote children's designing and making skills are not freely available within the room. The nursery has taken insufficient action to address the recommendations made at the last inspection and consequently they remain as areas for further improvement.

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.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve activities for children under three year in line with practice set out in the 'Birth to three matters' framework and ensure that children are able to make choices and freely select from a wide range of activities which are

appropriate to their level of development and cover all areas of their development

- ensure that appropriate steps are taken within the setting to promote the welfare and development of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and that staff provide an appropriate level of support by implementing the designed support plans
- ensure that space and resources are organised to meet children's needs effectively so that children's care and learning are not disrupted and ensure that monitoring systems for staff effectively support them to carry out their duties confidently and competently
- ensure that the registration systems fully comply with requirements and clearly indicate which staff are caring for which children.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve systems for monitoring the quality of the nursery education provision and evaluating its impact
- ensure children are sufficiently supported during planned and child initiated activities to enable them to gain the most from learning opportunities and that they are able to participate effectively during whole group activities
- develop staff's ability to plan the Foundation Stage curriculum effectively to meet the needs of all children and ensure assessments are used to identify and plan the next stages in children's learning so that their skills are sufficiently challenged and extended
- improve the planning of activities and the organisation of play resources to enable children to move freely between a wide range of practical activities, select their own equipment and tools and make independent choices about their play and learning.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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