



Brock House Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY234600
Inspection date	06 July 2006
Inspector	Anneliese Fox-Jones
Setting Address	6 Lemsford Road, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3PB
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Registered person	Brock House Nursery School 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 satisfactory. 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?

Brock House Nursery School and Baby Unit is privately owned and has been established since 1992. The nursery operates from five rooms and is based in a three storey detached house in the centre of St Albans, within walking distance to the city centre and railway station. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

Children are allocated to rooms according to their age and stage of development.

The older children use several rooms situated on the ground and first floor. The baby unit has a separate entrance and is located on the lower ground floor of the building. Brock House is open Monday to Friday from 07:30 to 18:45 for 51 weeks of the year.

The nursery is registered to provide care for a maximum of 63 children under five years at any one time. There are currently 91 children on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for nursery education.

The nursery employs 17 members of staff. Of these, 13 of the staff including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications and a further one is currently training in the workplace towards their NVQ in early years.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children remain healthy as they are beginning to learn the importance of hygiene and personal care. They adopt hygiene practices such as brushing their teeth and hand washing after toileting and before lunch. These practices and routines help reinforce children's understanding of healthy lifestyles. However, some procedures do not promote good hygiene and put children at risk of cross-infection, for example children do not always wash their hands before eating their snack, fruit is placed on the table and effective procedures are not in place to ensure that tables are always wiped.

Children enjoy their snack time as they sit with their peers. They benefit from varied and nutritious snacks including fruit and vegetables. Children can choose between milk and water at snack time. Staff are fully aware of any health and individual dietary needs of the children and receive relevant information from parents to ensure appropriate care is provided. Freshly cooked meals are prepared by staff and the cook each day. A five week menu is generally followed and displayed. This ensures children are offered a balanced diet of different meals and snacks. Meal times are not always organised to be a sociable time where children and staff interact positively. Drinks are available in some rooms, ensuring that children have access to drinking water all day. Children have opportunities to rest and sleep through the course of the day. Babies are checked at regular intervals and observed sleeping peacefully in individual cots.

Children enjoy physical activity. They develop strong manipulative skills as they have many opportunities to use their hands. They manipulate dough, pencils, paint brushes, rollers and control their movements when building bricks or pouring sand and water. All children benefit from weekly music and movement sessions lead by a peripatetic teacher. When the weather permits there are opportunities for children to enjoy the fresh air and exercise outside. Children have access to a variety of equipment to help them make progress in their physical development. Children enjoy dancing and playing musical statues. They move to the rhythm of the music and stop with control. Children learn about the changes that occur to their bodies after physical activities through topic work.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The nursery provides a welcoming and friendly environment for all children. Children are generally kept secure. Visitors must ring a bell to enter the building and are requested to sign in and out of the premises. Children use a suitable range of equipment that is appropriate to their needs. Older children independently access a variety of toys and resources set out by staff each session. Children have access to other areas of play such as a home corner and book area. Furniture is small sized and easy to use.

Children are cared for in a generally safe environment. Staff carry out basic visual checks on a daily basis and more detailed checks are carried out periodically. However, there remains some weaknesses in safety as not all hazards to the children on the premises, both inside and outside are effectively minimised. Therefore a robust risk assessment procedure is not effectively in place. Children learn to keep themselves safe as appropriate discussions help children understand the consequences of their actions. For example, staff encourage children to tidy up materials before they slip and are requested not to stand on chairs as they may fall. Children gain an awareness of the emergency evacuation procedures as these are discussed and practised.

Children are protected from staff who supervise them. Their welfare is safeguarded as staff follow sound guidelines regarding child protection and have an appropriate understanding of the procedures they need to implement. There are designated members of staff who have overall responsibility for child protection to ensure the correct procedures are followed if staff have any concerns in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are interested in a suitable range of activities. They explore their surroundings and the selection of resources, which staff set out each session. Children are generally busy and engage in role play, puzzles, sand play, construction, sticking and show enthusiasm when manipulating play dough. Activities are introduced in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This has the potential to enhance the care and experiences offered to younger children. Younger children are provided with many sensory experiences, such as exploring cooked pasta shapes, shredded paper and baked beans.

Children know the routines well and this helps them feel secure. They are building effective relationships with staff. Young children show an interest in books. They show enjoyment and concentration as staff read to the whole group. Children are learning to share and help staff tidy away the toys. Children are rewarded with lots of praise and encouragement.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some staff have an appropriate knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how young children develop. They plan a wide range of activities, however the learning intentions for the children are not highlighted. Children's individual development is observed and recorded. However, this information is not used to inform planning and their progress through the stepping stones is not sufficiently tracked. As a consequence, children's education cannot be fully monitored. Staff interact well with the children and use challenging questioning asking 'why' and 'how'.

Children communicate well with their peers and other adults. They enjoy show and tell time and speak confidently about items brought in from home. Children enjoy listening to stories and participate with enthusiasm to the story about the 'Gingerbread Man'. They are developing their writing skills as they complete 'alphabet letter' work sheets. There are some opportunities for children to practise their writing skills. Children are developing their mathematical skills through organised activities such as working with counting puppies. They learn to group numbers, and count with ease. Children confidently make comparisons about groups of more or less. They learn to subtract as they sing familiar number rhymes. However, children's learning of numbers and letters through free-choice play and through daily routine such as snack time is not fully extended.

Children have access to a computer and are increasing their knowledge of keyboard skills through organised office activities. They use toasters and cookers in the home corner confidently. Children are developing their understanding of wet and dry sand. They understand that they can manipulate wet sand and make pretend cakes, while pouring dry sand through funnels and water wheels. Children learn about their community, other countries and festivals through topic work, such as making flags representing different countries.

Most children are confident and eager to take part in activities. Children develop an understanding of the weather and days of the week during register time and recall from memory the activities they have carried out, thus developing their knowledge of the past and present. However, large registration and group time with the younger children in the nursery means that the older and more able children are not fully challenged.

Children explore a range of media and engage in creative activities. They enjoy swaying to music during group music time and draw freely using crayons. Children enjoy imaginative play in the home corner and use their imagination to act out situations. They pretend to be school children and pack pretend lunches as they prepare for school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, relaxed and secure in their surroundings. On arrival children separate from their parents and carers with ease. They receive a welcome from staff members. Staff are generally sensitive to their individual needs, for example, special

dietary needs are cared for well. Children have access to a varied range of resources, including books, dolls, dressing up, small world figures and planned activities celebrating different festivals. This helps them gain an awareness of diversity and the wider world. Older children's independence is sometimes encouraged as they help to tidy away the toys and help prepare for tea-time. The special needs coordinator for the nursery demonstrates a sound knowledge of assessment in this area and has a close link with the area coordinator. The nursery is aware that some children may have special needs and is proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken to ensure that children are included fully in the setting.

Children behave well throughout the provision. Staff listen to what children have to say and treat them with respect. They learn about responsible behaviour as staff reinforce the boundaries in a calm and positive way. Children are praised for their efforts and in some rooms they receive stickers to guide children's understanding of good behaviour. If required children have timeout, where staff can discuss any unacceptable behaviour.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. A varied range of topics and activities cover a range of cultures and beliefs. Individual children's backgrounds are acknowledged and respected. Children are learning to respect one another and their environment. They share, take turns and negotiate in their play. Children engage in conversations with adults and their peers and are developing effective social skills.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents are welcomed into the setting. They have opportunities to speak to staff at the beginning and end of their child's day and informally exchange information about the children. Staff also share information with parents through detailed daily sheets. Children benefit by parents receiving regular newsletters detailing topics and activities, this enables parents to be involved in their children's learning. Parents receive some information about the Foundation Stage and are invited to the nursery to share formally the progress their children are making. Parents responded positively to Ofsted about the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from being cared for by friendly and approachable staff, many of whom are experienced and long-standing employees. The manager works closely with her staff, who work generally well as a team. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities, although they have a limited understanding of the Day Care Standards and the Foundation Stage so that satisfactory standards of care and education are provided. The provision generally organises resources well, there are further opportunities for these to be rotated around on a regular basis and for older children to ask and make choices. Staff spend most of their time interacting with the children. Children are generally busy, engaged and provided with sufficient activities and play opportunities to develop their emotional, physical, social and intellectual

capabilities. The children's needs are met.

Most records, policies and procedures are effectively maintained in line with the National Standards. However, some documentation is not consistently maintained. For example, accident records do not highlight that parents are always informed and attendance records are not promptly updated during children's arrival and departure times. Consequently, this compromises children's safety and well-being.

The leadership and management of the group is satisfactory. The manager has developed effective relationships with the team. Six monthly appraisals enable her to offer support, and staff are encouraged to update their skills. All staff work well together in trying to implement a wide range of activities which promote children's development. However, some issues raised during the last inspection have not been addressed. Weaknesses in planning and assessment impact directly on the children's progress and has an adverse effect on their knowledge and understanding towards the stepping stones. There is only one member of staff who has attended the Foundation Stage training, consequently children miss out on opportunities for spontaneous learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the provider was asked to address several issues to improve the quality of the provision. The nursery was asked to ensure any potential hazards are made safe or inaccessible to the children with regards to ivy, brambles, rotary line, bricks, shed and safety gates; ensure good hygiene practices are in place regarding nappy changing cream; and extend the illness policy, special education needs policy and the child protection policy. Staff now employ appropriate methods to minimise cross-infection by supplying separate named cream pots for each child when nappy changing. Policies have been reviewed in line with recent changes to include more detail for staff and parents. Some progress has been made with regards to safety. However, some issues still remain.

During the last education inspection the provision was asked to: develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage; increase opportunities for children to freely access malleable materials and engage in imaginative free play; and monitor the access to ICT equipment and develop resources to allow opportunities for children to experience climbing activities. Some of these issues have been addressed as children now enjoy creating with play dough thus increasing their manipulative and creative skills. Due to a change in staff, the provision is currently reviewing the Foundation Stage training to enhance children's learning. Children have access to a computer during free play which is monitored, however, they were not observed using this.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. 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 good health is promoted at meal times and positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection
- ensure effective risk assessment procedures are in place and that hazards to the children are minimised with regards to; overgrown trees, dangerous plants, folded furniture, floor mats and debris outside
- ensure that group sizes and durations are appropriate to meet the children's needs effectively
- ensure that accident records are signed by parents; and children's arrival and departure times are promptly recorded

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 staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage
- develop planning to ensure that all aspects of learning are covered within the six areas and children are appropriately challenged
- ensure clear assessments of children's progress are used effectively to inform planning.

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