



Sandcastles Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	403985
Inspection date	20 February 2007
Inspector	Lisa Paisley
Setting Address	81 London Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 2QL
Telephone number	01702 555171
E-mail	info@sandcastlesnursery.co.uk
Registered person	Sandcastles Nursery 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Sandcastles Nursery is privately owned. It opened in 2000 and operates from seven rooms within a converted two-storey school, together with an annexe known as The Ark and a two storey house known as Pebbles in Hadleigh, Essex. A maximum of 99 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.00 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 79 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 48 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The nursery employs 31 staff. Eighteen of the staff, including both managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Eleven staff are currently attending training.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive because staff follow highly exceptional and effective procedures and practices, which meet the children's physical, nutritional and health needs. The experienced adult support and guidance helps children gain an excellent understanding of hygiene and a real desire to become increasingly independent in their personal care such as going to the toilet and dressing themselves for outdoor play. Children are aware of good hygiene through planned activities and the daily routines. For example, they know when and why to wash their hands and wipe their noses. Staff wear disposables gloves and aprons during nappy changes, which helps to fully protect very young children and babies from cross-infection. Children in each room are cared for by at least one member of staff with first aid training and a total of 21 members of staff have a current certificate. Staff are aware of the medical needs of individual children and first aid boxes are located in each room. This ensures that children receive appropriate care if they become ill or have an accident.

Children explore, test and develop very good physical control in the stimulating and inspiring indoor and outdoor play experiences that are provided by the nursery. The extensive garden provides creative and inspiring play areas for all the children such as the Jack and Jill tunnel, the daffodil maze and the wild garden. Staff have an excellent knowledge of each child's stage of development. Their exceptional understanding means all children are offered appropriate good physical challenges in a safe, well planned and stimulating environment. They are given sufficient time to use a range of equipment such as the climbing frame, see-saw, tricycles, balls and musical instruments. Children also have extensive opportunities to practice their finer manipulative skills as they have very good access to an excellent range of resources, this includes scissors, threading and tools for play dough.

Children help themselves to easily accessible drinking water through out the day. Younger children and babies are offered regular drinks as staff have a good understanding of their individual needs. Snack and meal times are healthy and well balanced, taking into account the individual and cultural needs of all children. Meal times are a relaxed sociable time where children gain confidence in eating in small groups and develop positive attitudes towards food. Older children are able to talk about 'good' and 'bad' foods as they learn about healthy foods through planned activities such as growing their own vegetables in the allotment and regular discussions, contributing to children understanding about healthy lifestyles.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The nursery has highly effective and secure measures in place, ensuring that risks to children's safety, both indoors and outdoors, are minimised such as clear procedures for the safe arrival and departure of children to and from the nursery. Formal risk assessments are effective in ensuring that potential hazards to children are minimised, for example, the safety gates are securely fixed and appropriately used and the stairways and gym areas are safe for children. There are comprehensive and clearly written safety procedures in place that staff know about

and are consistently applied. Staff have an effective awareness of how to organise space, furniture and equipment enabling children to move freely and independently between activities and different play areas. As a result, children feel confident within the nursery and are safe and secure.

All the group rooms and communal areas are brightly decorated with children's art work, posters, hanging decorative mobiles, photographs and letter and number prints. The premises are very clean, well lit, and effectively heated, ensuring that it is suitable for children to use at all times. Resources in each room are well organised so they are attractive and accessible to children. Children in the baby room have toys set out on the floor and low tables for them to reach by rolling, crawling and pulling themselves up. Older children are able to use low drawers and shelves to choose toys and resources as well as the range of activities that are set out each day by staff. They enthusiastically select their own play resources which are appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Play equipment is stored at child height, promoting independence and choice. Children learn about keeping themselves safe through regular fire drills and by gentle reminders from staff such as no running indoors, tidying away toys and sitting on chairs sensibly.

Children are effectively protected as staff have a very good understanding of child protection procedures and how to keep children safe. A comprehensive written policy is in place and staff are able to recognise signs of abuse and know whom to contact if they are concerned about a child in their care. A named staff member is responsible for child protection and they have an excellent understanding of their role, through attending training and keeping up to date with any changes such as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). Parents are informed of the group's responsibility regarding child protection reassuring parents of their child's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for and taught by highly motivated and enthusiastic staff. This helps children to become fully engaged in the activities they are completing. A key worker system helps to ensure that children feel secure. Key workers communicate effectively with parents to keep them informed about the progress their child is making as well as sharing any relevant information on a daily basis.

Babies enjoy the benefits of lots of cuddles and close contact with the staff and they have secure relationships with their key workers. The nursery have comprehensively and extensively implemented the 'Birth to three matters' framework, ensuring young children participate in an extensive range of planned focused activities, ensuring they are making exceptional developmental progress. Children are encouraged to take the lead in selecting activities and staff support this by encouraging children to explore and investigate toys and resources, all the time talking to them and asking questions to help with the development of language and communication skills.

The out of school children enjoy participating in an extensive and inspiring range of activities, for example, cooking, creative, construction, role play, the garden and trips out to the local park and cinema. Topics are planned for older children and during the February half term week

they particularly enjoyed science experiments, for example, making crystals, floating and sinking objects. Children are given excellent opportunities to participate in outdoor activities such as an obstacle course, basket ball and dodge ball, encouraging children to be physically active and develop a positive understanding of teamwork. The organisation of the setting allows children to make choices from resources that are provided at their level and independently access from what is on offer.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making excellent progress towards the stepping stones and the early learning goals. Staff have an extensive knowledge of the Foundation Stage, children's developmental progress and how children learn. Staff use an extensive range of teaching strategies and methods, for example, children are given time to explore their ideas and imaginations. Planning is of a very high standard and is comprehensive. Activity plans cover all the six areas of learning and focus activities includes differentiation and evaluations for each individual child. Planned activities have clear learning intentions, this enables staff to identify next steps, track children's individual progress and plan for future activities.

Children are exceptionally happy and contented within the nursery. They arrive happily and settle quickly into the extensive range of activities available. Children's confidence, speaking and listening skills are encouraged and developed through speech and drama lessons which are offered to children. They have extensive opportunities to write for a purpose, with free access to writing and mark making materials and many children are able to write their names. Role play equipment and dressing up clothes support children in developing communication skills and promote imaginative play, for example, the shipwreck. Staff participate effectively in role play with children to help them learn about everyday activities in the real world, such as a car wash and a nursery. Children enjoy reading and listening to stories, they share books with each other, talking about the pictures and looking at words. Children enjoying reading alongside staff who use the opportunity to ask them questions, maintain their interest and help bring the story to life for them. They have opportunities to participate in French lessons where they learn key words in practical situations, for example, role play at the café using play food and naming items. Children are developing an excellent understanding of early mathematical concepts through daily routines and practical experiences, for example, number songs and counting at snack time. Children count confidently to ten in the correct order and they recognise groups with one, two or three objects. They have extensive opportunities to explore shape, texture and volume when playing with sand, corn flour, water or making play dough as they weigh and measure the flour and water.

Children have very good and inspiring opportunities to explore objects which help them to learn about the natural world such as sand, wooden logs, shells, growing their own fruit and vegetables and participating in the daffodil maze. Children learn about their local community through inviting visitors into the nursery such as Southend United football club, fire safety officer and the local police officer. They also have excellent opportunities to take trips out into the community, for example, the local shops, park, beach, Marsh farm and Colchester zoo. Children can freely access musical instruments in order to learn about making different sounds, staff encourage this, helping children to identify and play simple patterns and rhythms in music.

They enjoy moving their arms and bodies to make jelly fish and tail swishing movements. Children have free access to creative materials and can paint or draw at any time, they particularly enjoy making three dimensional models from recyclable products. Children have extensive and exciting opportunities to develop their physical skills when using the creative and inspiring gym area and garden. For example, using the climbing frame, bats and balls, scooters, tricycles and the wide variety of play areas such as the wild garden. They move safely around the building both indoors and out, they enjoy balancing, running, skipping and using bean bags. Children also have opportunities to participate in swimming lessons, helping them gain confidence in the water. Their finer manipulative skills are effectively developed as the extensive range of equipment such as threading, magnetic, puzzles and scissors which staff provide in an inspiring, focused and interesting activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children take part in activities which reflect the diversity of the society in which they live. They learn about different celebrations, for example, Chinese New Year, the Dragon Boat Race, Valentine's Day, Easter and World Week Day. They are able to access an extensive and inspiring range of resources which reflect diversity, including books, dolls, play people, puzzles, play food, dressing up clothes, pictures and posters. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities take part fully in nursery activities. They are well supported by staff who have a positive approach to meeting their needs. A named member of staff has a very good understanding and practical experience in supporting children with special needs. They effectively work with parents, outside agencies and staff members to ensure that all children develop confidence and make very good developmental progress. Consequently, an inclusive environment is effectively promoted.

Children settle quickly at the nursery as staff work successfully with parents to ensure children's individual needs are met. Staff actively seek information from parents before a child starts at the nursery regarding their interests and abilities. This enables them to build on and develop children's previous knowledge, understanding and skills. Children are consistently very well behaved and they have a very strong sense of caring for others, which is strongly promoted by staff. Children are well supported by staff who regularly use praise and encouragement to promote children's self-esteem. They learn to share play equipment and take turns and increasingly take responsibility for their own actions. Children have a very good sense of self control through the positive role models that staff provide. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are extensively informed about the provision the nursery offers and how their children are progressing. Parents are welcomed into the nursery to help their children to settle or to talk to staff about any concerns they may have. Parents also receive regular newsletters and notes which keep them up to date with events and activities their children will be participating in. They are also able to access the nursery website to keep further up to date. Notices on the information board in the reception area and in individual group rooms informs parents about the Foundation Stage and regular meetings are arranged with parents to discuss their child's developmental progress.

Parents are aware of how to make complaints about the provision and these are dealt with in a prompt and professional way. Staff listen to parents' concerns and, where appropriate, adapt their policies and procedures accordingly. Parents are provided with the contact details for the regulator if they should wish to take a complaint further.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children are provided with an exceptional level of care, supported and enhanced by the clear and extensive policies developed and implemented by the nursery. These ensure that staff are consistent in their interactions with children and in their regard for safety and security. Records and details relating to staff and children are comprehensive and are obtained, recorded and stored appropriately, ensuring that the nursery is meeting legal requirements relating to documentation.

Children are cared for by staff who have been checked through the Criminal Records Bureau and who have undergone a robust and extensive recruitment and induction programme. This ensures that all staff working with children are suitable and have relevant training and experience.

The use of available space within the nursery is effectively organised, with clear areas for storage, play, food preparation, changing, eating and sleeping. These areas are exceptionally well managed by staff to allow children to play, eat and rest safely and securely

Leadership and management is outstanding. The registered providers, managers and staff are professional, enthusiastic and highly motivated in their approach to providing all the children with positive early years play and learning experiences. Staff have clearly identified roles and responsibilities such as equal opportunity and behaviour management and they carry out their roles to a very high standard. Regular staff meetings ensure that the care and education children receive is regularly discussed and improved, with all staff members having the opportunity to contribute ideas and suggestions. Staff are deployed successfully within the nursery and good staffing ratios are maintained at all times ensuring children are well supervised and supported during activities. Staff have an extensive awareness of the policies and procedures which are in place. Consequently, children are cared for by experienced and knowledgeable staff and benefit from continuity of care.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the nursery agreed; to ensure that written procedures are in place for delivering and collecting children to and from schools, review the written permission statement from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment and ensure that the child protection statement includes contact and telephone numbers for the local police and social services and for procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation made against a member of staff or volunteer. All the relevant policies and procedures have been updated and amended ensuring clear and effective procedures for transporting children to and from

the nursery, dealing with any medical advice or treatment issues and child protection concerns. Consequently, staff have a good and clear understanding of their role and parents are fully informed.

At the last education inspection there were no key issues identified, a point for consideration was to continue to extend the use of observations and assessment records based on the stepping stones, to further inform the short term planning for individual children. Observations and assessments records have been extended and are linked to the stepping stones and this informs future activity plans. Consequently, the nursery continues to develop further their practises in the delivery of the nursery education.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk