



Whipper-snappers Day Care Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 402288

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Inspector Julie Ann Birkett

Setting Address Felmoor Farm, Braintree Road, Felsted, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 3EF

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Registered person Whipper-snappers Day Care Nursery

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

At the time of the inspection there were no children in receipt of nursery education. Ofsted judges that the provider remains suitable to provide nursery education.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Whipper-snappers Day Care Nursery is a privately owned nursery and out of school provision. It opened in 1994 and operates from four converted barn buildings in a rural location on the outskirts of Felsted. A maximum of 110 children may attend at any one time. The provision is open each weekday from 07.45 to 18.15 for 51 weeks

of the year. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 166 children aged under 8 years on roll. Of these, 56 are eligible to receive funding for early education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The scheme employs 26 staff. Of these, 21, including the manager, hold appropriate qualifications. Seven staff are working towards a qualification or a higher qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is promoted well through effective nursery routines and procedures. Children are protected from cross-infection because staff follow good hygiene practices. For example, they wear disposable gloves and aprons when changing nappies and clean tables and high chair trays with anti-bacterial cleaner. The baby and toddler rooms implement a 'no shoe' policy to ensure the floors where children crawl and play remain clean and germ-free from outside debris.

The younger children learn about their own personal care through daily routines when they are encouraged to make their hands very soapy and are told that this will "wash all the germs away". The older children take responsibility for their own hygiene needs when they use the soap dispensers and take tissues from the dispenser on the wall.

Children are well nourished because they are provided with a good range of healthy foods at meals times. All children enjoy the food there are given and eat well. The younger children are encouraged to feed themselves by supportive staff. The older children have good opportunities to be independent when they access the healthy options at the snack bar. All children benefit from social meal times with staff sitting alongside them. This fosters children's communication skills as well as good table manners. Children learn about healthy foods through their play and topics and themes they work on. For example, the younger children look at books with staff and use play food in the role play area. The older children see bright displays of good foods in the snack area and enjoy cooking activities which promotes conversation about foods that are good for them. The children sow, tend and pick vegetables to eat from the vegetable garden learning first-hand about the benefits of fresh, naturally grown foods. The school age children contribute to menu planning which further promotes conversation about healthy and balanced diets.

Menus are displayed to ensure parents and carers know what their children have been offered. An informative nursery healthy eating policy is displayed throughout the nursery which underpins the nursery ethos to promote healthy eating. Parents and

carers are also provided with information about babies weaning and helpful, fun ways to encourage children's healthy eating at home. These measures demonstrate that the nursery work in partnership with parents and carers to promote the children's good health.

Children enjoy lots of fun activities which promote their physical strength and well-being. Inside, the babies enjoy crawling through tunnels and playing pee-a-boo games. Their walking skills are promoted when they use push-along toys. The older children develop their strength and co-ordination well when they play chasing games over the humps in the garden and ride the bikes and scooters along the designated pathways. Children delight in crouching and hiding in the wigwam made around the tree. The oldest children have good opportunities to challenge their physical skills when they use the big climbing frame in the garden. All children benefit from fresh air each day, which stimulates their minds and bodies, when they play in the garden or go for walks in the nursery grounds and orchards.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in premises that are welcoming and friendly. The playrooms are spread out over four buildings and in large grounds, but clear signs ensure that parents and carers and visitors know where to find what they need. The outside of the nursery is made welcoming because it is well maintained and sited in attractive grounds. Children are tempted to see what goes on inside the nursery rooms because of the attractive window dressings and being able to see other children busy at play inside through the many low windows.

Space is used well to meet the needs of the children. The babies particularly benefit from separate sleep rooms where they sleep peacefully according to their own routines. The pre-school children enjoy using the different designated play rooms for particular areas of play which provides them with scope for larger imaginative and creative play. All children benefit from being able to play freely and safely inside and out because staff carry out daily checks to ensure that the premises are safe to do so. An extensive risk assessment is carried out on the premises to ensure risks to children are minimised. For example, finger guards are in place on all doors to prevent small fingers becoming trapped.

Children have access to a good range of well-maintained toys and equipment. Children use a range of natural and recycled objects which further extends their play resources and opportunities. For example, they enjoy pretend play with large cardboard boxes and life-size kitchen utensils. There is suitable and sufficient child-sized furniture to enable children to play and eat together. There is no domestic style furniture in the baby room to assist in developing children's mobility and to continue their normal life experiences. This also impacts on staff because they do not have any adult size furniture to sit comfortably when bottle feeding babies. Regular checks are carried out on equipment to ensure it is still safe and suitable for the children to use.

Children are encouraged to develop a good understanding of keeping themselves

safe. For example, the youngest ones hear staff telling them that they are being strapped into their chairs and buggies to stop them falling out. The older children learn the rules to keep themselves safe when playing on the equipment in the garden. For example, they know they must not crowd each other at the top of the slide in case it causes someone to fall. All children practise fire evacuation procedures regularly so that they can all get out of the building safely. The older children take part in topics such as, 'people who help us' which further develops their understanding of adults who can help them keep safe in their lives outside nursery.

Children are safeguarded because all staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and the protection of the children is their first priority. A number of staff have child protection training and all staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the procedures to follow with any concerns. Staff maintain regular informal communication with parents which develops strong partnerships between all those involved in keeping children safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have a busy time at the nursery and out of school scheme. Lots of children's laughter can be heard which indicates they are happy in their play and learning. They have opportunities to develop their emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities through age-appropriate activities and play experiences. The younger children benefit from the staff's training, knowledge and use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework in planning a varied range of activities and opportunities. The oldest children in the out of school scheme participate in activities that foster their enthusiasm because they are able to decide what they would like to do in their 'free-time' away from the routines of school life.

All children's confidence and self-esteem is promoted through the daily routines. They receive lots of praise and encouragement for the things they do which promotes a positive attitude to future learning. The babies' dependence on familiar adults is lessened as they are encouraged to join in group activities. As they become increasingly independent they have good opportunities to access play equipment for themselves to develop their own ideas and games. The older children demonstrate independent thought and actions in their everyday play. For example, getting the resources needed to make a picture and developing a hopscotch game without adult intervention. The school age children make drawings and lists of things they do well which helps them focus on their achievements and promotes their feeling of self-worth.

The babies demonstrate their natural curiosity as learners when they point to things they see and delight in the sound makers they shake. The older children investigate a shallow puddle of water found under the water tray and talk about the tiny bugs they see in the garden. Children take part in a number of planned activities to promote their sensory and explorative skills. For example, they play with sand, water and dough and compare the textures of silky and rough fabrics. Children explore sounds as they use the interesting musical instruments and create soft and loud

music. In some parts of the nursery the good resources and equipment are not used to their full potential to further encourage children's curiosity and learning through spontaneous opportunities. For example, children do not play with some toys and resources because they are not attractively presented so as to encourage their interest. In the baby room and big barn there are few low-level interactive displays to encourage conversation. The interesting 'treasure baskets' full of natural and household items provide good opportunities for the youngest children to develop their explorative skills and helps them make meaning of what they see and touch. However, these are generally saved for planned times and are not a regular part of the children's free play time.

Children have good opportunities to develop their language skills. The babies spend time with adults sharing books and the toddlers look at photographs of themselves on the wall. Staff talk to the young children constantly and show that they understand the children's responses. The older children are confident speakers and ask lots of questions such as, why, what and how. Children discover the meaning of new words when staff introduce them to a wider vocabulary in everyday situations. All children enjoy singing rhymes and listening to stories which further promotes their language development.

Children's mathematical thinking is fostered well. The babies and toddlers play with small world equipment and are beginning to sort and match items and classify them by their use. The older children are beginning to name the shapes they see around them. They learn about number when they sing songs and use their fingers to represent how many they have.

Children use their imaginations in lots of everyday play. The very youngest children act out simple familiar home scenes as they make pretend cups of tea to share with the staff and cradle and care for their dolls. As they develop their imaginative play becomes more detailed. For example, the climbing frame becomes a pirate ship and the children travel the world looking for buried treasure and discover lions and giant spiders who spin enormous webs. The school age children design an indoor den and decide to create a 'campsite' when they have their snack outside in the tent.

As previously outlined in this report, the children have very good opportunities for their physical development and the garden area is used each day and in most weathers. The children learn about life cycles as they grow vegetables and see the butterflies and bugs enjoying the flowers. They play imaginatively with the buggies and bicycles pretending to go off to visit friends and family. Some activities which develop children's other skills are set up outside such as, a writing table and a sand tray. Staff demonstrate some understanding of how the outdoor area can effectively reinforce and develop children's learning. For example, they have attached drain pipes to some of the fencing so that children can see how the rain water travels down it. However, this beneficial resource is not used to its full potential to extend the children's play and learning in all areas of their development and in more exciting ways than possible indoors.

Nursery education.

This inspection took place during the summer holiday and children aged from three to

five years are not in receipt of government funding for early years education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress across all the areas of learning. This is because staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how to implement it effectively to help the children take the next steps in their learning. Staff are well qualified and experienced in working with this age group and in the delivery of the curriculum. They keep abreast of nursery funded education issues through ongoing internal and external training.

There is a good planning system in place which includes long, medium and short term plans. These clearly show how the children develop across the stepping stones of learning towards the early learning goals. The short term plans show how basic, daily core activities provide children with varied learning opportunities in different areas of their learning. These written plans also show what children are able to learn from a range of focussed activities throughout the week. For example, how their mathematical skills can be enhanced by using graded sized bears and cards. Focussed activity sheets are used to plan how children will be grouped, how the activity will be organised and resourced and how the different learning needs of the children will be met. Staff evaluate these activities to ensure they are effective and appropriate for the children. Children are provided with a broad range of experiences to foster their interest and motivation because all pre-school staff work together on these plans sharing ideas and information.

Children's assessment records, including parents and carers written input, progress with them through the nursery. This enables staff to know what the children's starting points are and how best to meet their learning needs. Children's ongoing progress is monitored because staff make regular informative observations of what the children already know and can do. These written observations are evaluated and the individual children's next steps are identified under the six areas of learning. This information, as well as the staff's overall knowledge of the children, is used at curriculum meetings to help staff plan for the children's next steps.

Children aged between three and five years, who are normally in receipt of funded nursery education, were present at the time of the inspection enjoying their 'fun' sessions. They demonstrate a good attitude to learning and are confident and curious. They share and take turns and work amicably with each other. For example, negotiating the parachute as a whole team and allowing another child a turn on the scooter.

From examples of work on the wall it is clear that children have good mark making skills, with the more able being able to write their own names and those of others. They link sounds and letters well when they play eye-spy. They show enjoyment of books when they choose to sit and look at them during their free play time. Children understand that stories have a beginning and end and can finish off rhyming sentences. Children confidently use number in their play as they count the number of jumps they have done. They easily recognise numerals from one to nine and can solve simple number problems such as, how many more they need to have the same as their friend.

Children show their creativity and imaginations in their free play. They devise role

play games and allocate roles to their friends. They enjoy being expressive with paint, cutting and sticking and create very individual pictures. Children design and build with construction toys and models from previous projects decorate the pre-school room.

Children show their understanding of the passage of time as they talk about what they used to do at nursery and about going off to school. They talk about life cycles when looking at the 'butterfly bush' and how the tomatoes have grown.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children settle quickly into nursery life because there are good procedures to support children and staff are warm and caring. This effectively helps children take the difficult step of separating from their families. The very youngest children develop a good sense of being special to someone through their daily routines and experiences. For example, parents and carers hand their babies over to a member of staff when they arrive. Staff chat enthusiastically to babies to encourage the children's sense of well-being. As they get older this is developed into a sense of being part of the group. For example, children know they have a space for their own things and the names of the room they belong to. Older children are able to access things for themselves because they are provided with well labelled boxes of equipment mostly stored at low-level. This also fosters children's sense of responsibility because they are encouraged to return things when they have finished using them. The school age children help to devise the 'house rules' for the out of school club and they use a suggestion box to post their ideas on the activities they would like to do. This helps them feel that their views are valued and that they have some say in what happens at the club.

Children play and learn in an environment where the registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children. Children develop an understanding of people's similarities and differences because they see positive images and play with toys and resources which reflect diversity. Children also learn about the wider world when they take part in celebrations of traditional and world festivals.

Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of children with learning difficulties or disabilities within the setting in partnership with the parents and carers and other relevant parties. There is a named member of staff who co-ordinates the sharing of information to enable all staff to meet the individual needs of the children and plan for their ongoing progress.

Children understand responsible behaviour and learn about boundaries and expectations. The very youngest children develop good trusting relationships with the staff as they sit playing alongside each other. Their developing independence is encouraged as they grow and they are well supported as they try more challenging experiences. Staff help these youngest children cope with frustration through sensitive and age-appropriate distraction and diversion. As the children develop they are encouraged to think about how their behaviour affects themselves and others.

Children benefit from activities and topics that encourage them to think about feelings and consequences of their actions. For example, sharing story books and acting these out with puppets and dressing-up clothes. The school age children have good opportunities to talk about issues such as, bullying and how that affects them and their friends. All these measures help the children learn right from wrong and promotes their good behaviour.

Children's welfare is promoted well because the management team and staff work effectively in partnership with parents and carers to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. There are good systems in place to ensure that information is shared between staff and parents and carers. There are daily record sheets to share the under two-years-olds' routines with their parents and carers. Parents and carers are actively encouraged to contribute to the children's assessment records and the next steps for their child's progress. This ensures that there is consistency between home and nursery life and promotes the children's development and well-being. Working in partnership is further promoted through a good range of information displayed throughout the nursery. Information booklets regarding many different aspects of childcare are available in the office reception and provide an additional useful resource for parents and carers.

Partnership with parents and carers of funded nursery education children is good. Children benefit from these good relationships because they see their parents and carers working with the staff. Parents and carers are well informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum and how this promotes their child's learning in the nursery. They are provided with written information about the six areas of learning through an informative guide. They are able to attend meetings about how the staff deliver the curriculum in the pre-school rooms. Written plans are displayed in the nursery so that parents and carers are aware of what and how their child is learning. Termly newsletters are sent home regarding the coming topics and themed works which encourages parents and carers to link nursery learning to home events and situations.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. This is because staff provide appropriate activities, experiences and resources which encourage conversation and first-hand experiences.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are protected and their welfare promoted because there are good systems in place to ensure adults working with the children are suitable to do so. Recruitment and induction procedures are robust and ensure that all staff are aware of working practices in the nursery. There is an ongoing system for staff appraisal which includes their future professional development plans. All staff contribute to regular nursery self-evaluation forms which contribute to the nursery action plan for improvement. These measures foster staff and nursery development and ultimately promote positive outcomes for children.

Children benefit from the high proportion of qualified staff working in the nursery. All

staff demonstrate a strong commitment to ongoing training to develop their skills and knowledge. They attend numerous courses and workshops throughout the year such as, child protection, reading stories, behaviour management and 'boredom busters'. This ensures that children are cared for and supported by staff who are knowledgeable and motivated by new ideas. The management team support their staff effectively through monitoring their practice and regular staff meetings. New ideas for further improvement are discussed by all staff. For example, the staff are currently looking at how they can improve the key-worker system.

There is an extensive operational plan which clearly outlines the aims of the nursery and how these will be achieved to promote the children's safety, care and learning. The well written policies and procedures underpin the good working practices in the nursery. All the required documentation is well maintained to ensure the efficient day-to-day management of the provision.

Leadership and management of the funded nursery education is good. The management team are positive in their approach and work hard to lead all staff in achieving good results with the children. They are committed to the improvement of care and education for all children. The management team regularly review the working practices in the pre-school and evaluate the impact on the children. This helps them identify areas for improvement which can be included in the development plan. Staff working with the pre-school children are allocated non-contact time away from the children so that they can concentrate on planning the curriculum and for the children's next steps.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure that all medicine records are signed by parents and carers and to update the child protection and behaviour management policies in line with changes in legislation. With regard to nursery education, they were asked to make improvements to the planning and assessment records and to share these with parents and carers.

Staff have improved children's health and well-being because all medicine records are signed by parents and carers therefore acknowledging the appropriate administering of medication. Policies and procedures are now in line with legislation. Children's safety and ability to have a positive contribution to the setting is improved because these are implemented in the setting.

Staff in the pre-school rooms have developed effective systems for recording the children's progress. These include stepping stones checklists as well as written observations of the children and examples of their work. This results in a good profile of what the children can do and effectively assists staff in planning the children's next steps. Parents and carers are able to contribute to the assessment records through comments sheets that are sent home with the records at set times during the year. As previously outlined in this report, other information about the Foundation Stage curriculum is made available to parents and carers to foster learning at home.

Staff in the pre-school rooms have devised useful focussed activity sheets which assist all staff in supporting children in their learning and to help them make good progress.

All the above measures have improved the care and learning of the children in the setting which is of a good standard.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received information which raised concerns about National Standards 1: Suitable Person, 2: Organisation, 6: Safety, 8: Food and Drink, 11: Behaviour Management and 12: Working Partnership with Parents. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit to the provision on 25 May 2005. Upon investigation Ofsted found no evidence to substantiate the concerns except that staff to child ratios were not always maintained at sleep times. The provider was given an action under Standard 2 to ensure that correct adult to child ratios are maintained at sleep times. A satisfactory response to the actions was received on 29 June 2005.

The provider remains suitable for registration.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents and carers, 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 good.

At the time of the inspection there were no children in receipt of nursery education. Ofsted judges that the provider remains suitable to provide nursery education.

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):

- provide some domestic style furniture in the baby room to assist children in developing mobility and to continue normal life experiences and to enable staff to sit comfortably when bottle feeding young babies

- review the use of the good range of resources available to provide a more stimulating environment for the children
- continue to develop the outdoor area to provide further opportunities for the children's learning across all areas of their development

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 to include more effective use of the outdoor space so that children can learn across all the areas by working on a larger, more creative scale than is possible indoors to help them develop and reinforce their learning.

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