



Little Fishes Lakenheath

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	251561
Inspection date	05 July 2006
Inspector	Emma Bright
Setting Address	Cricket Club, Eriswell Road, Lakenheath, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 9AF
Telephone number	01842 861642
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Registered person	Little Fishes Lakenheath
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Fishes Pre-School is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the setting. It opened in 1999 and operates from the Cricket Pavilion in the village of Lakenheath. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open five days a week from 09:00 to 12:00 (Monday to Friday) and 12:15 to 14:45 (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday) during school term times. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 44 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 30 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a small number of children with disabilities.

The pre-school employs seven staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is currently working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's very good health is promoted because thorough procedures and routines are in place to ensure that they stay healthy and protected from infection. Staff act as good role models, washing their own hands and wiping down tables with anti-bacterial spray before serving food, to help children to remain healthy. Children clearly understand personal hygiene, washing their hands because "germs are on our hands". In addition, they help to clean tables ready for snack using small spray bottles filled with water and cloths; they competently busy themselves wiping the tables and explain that they do this to "make the tables clean for snack". The setting operates a sun protection policy, which staff strictly enforce; all children consistently take their hats and put them on before going outside and this ensures that they are well protected from the sun.

Children are well cared for if they become unwell or in the event of an accident because clear information is gathered from parents and records are in place to make sure that appropriate care is given. Accurate details of children's allergies and medical needs are recorded and all staff are aware so that they can act swiftly in an emergency. Thorough recording systems ensure that parents are informed of any accidents their child sustains whilst at the setting.

Children learn to lead a healthy lifestyle through everyday, meaningful experiences. Staff have a good knowledge of childhood health and provide a range of activities for children to experience. For example, children grow vegetables and herbs in tubs; they tend the plants and help to harvest them for use in cooking activities. Children tuck in enthusiastically to a range of healthy snacks, such as marmite on toast, fresh fruit or cheese and crackers. They are beginning to make connections about healthy food being 'good for you' and explain that cheese "gives you muscles in your arms". All children readily help themselves to fresh drinking water throughout the session whenever they need it so that they are well hydrated.

All children benefit from the strong emphasis on physical development and outdoor play, which ensures they receive plenty of exercise to promote their growth and development. Children move independently between indoors and outdoors throughout the session, accessing a wide range of activities provided to develop their growing physical skills. For example, they crawl through tunnels, competently climb large apparatus and confidently jump along stepping stones. Well chosen resources and the good adult support means that activities provide physical challenges to children. Many 'indoor' activities are available in the spacious outdoor area. For

example, children competently use small nets to catch 'fish' in water play or garden utensils to dig in the mud and water the plants, which develops their small physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move freely between indoors and outdoors, accessing equipment and activities independently to follow their own interests. Emphasis is given to making sure that the environment is welcoming and very well prepared with a range of activities, which stimulates children's interest and enhances their development. Areas are clearly defined, such as a computer station, book corner and role play area, which children readily use in their play. Thorough safety policies and procedures are clearly implemented by staff to ensure children's safety. However, the lost and uncollected child procedure is in need of updating as it is not complete, which affects children's safety in an emergency.

All children have access to a treasure trove of good quality, accessible and safe resources and equipment. This means they engage in purposeful activity, as they safely choose items themselves to promote their independence. Resources have been carefully selected to support children's play. They are cleaned and checked regularly to ensure that they remain safe and in good condition. The low-level accessible storage of equipment significantly enhances the children's independence and development.

Children's safety is enhanced by good security procedures to restrict access to the setting and prevent them from leaving the premises unaccompanied. Staff are particularly vigilant in their supervision of children and consistently check that sufficient adults are present, both indoor and outdoors. Children learn about keeping safe as staff provide clear, simple explanations to help them think about why, for example, they wait their turn on the slide. Children know that this is because they could fall off and hurt themselves. This helps children develop their understanding of hazards and to take responsibility for themselves.

Children are very well protected and kept safe from harm as all staff have an excellent understanding of their role in child protection. They regularly access training to ensure their knowledge is up-to-date and in line with local procedures, which means that children's welfare is fully safeguarded. Parents are well informed about the setting's responsibilities through a clear and detailed policy, which is included in the parents' brochure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children relish their time in the stimulating and well-resourced environment. They arrive with eager anticipation, separating happily from their parents and carers, and settling readily into their activities. Children actively pursue their own interests and

are highly motivated by the rich learning experiences on offer. They are extremely confident and independent as they busy themselves, becoming absorbed in their self-chosen activity. For example, children sustain attention for long periods of time, playing with small cars and observing how the lift mechanism in the garage works.

Children play competently on their own or with others and form strong friendships with their peers. Close and caring relationships throughout the setting increase children's sense of trust and help them to develop a sense of self. Staff are sensitive to children's needs and consistently interact with them to extend their learning and play; they listen to children's comments and ideas, treating what all children say with respect. This contributes significantly to children's sense of belonging and continuously develops their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of child development and how young children learn. They use the 'Birth to three matters' framework as a reference tool to create an environment where younger children thrive. They acquire new knowledge and skills because staff gently encourage them to participate in activities and use good questioning skills to help them think and develop their language.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit from staff's very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn through practical, meaningful activities. Detailed planning is in place, which provides a range of interesting activities and experiences that cover all areas of learning. A good balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. However, some activities are not extended sufficiently for older and more able children, which mean they do not benefit from additional challenge. Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones, and observations inform children's assessment records, which show that they are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children are highly independent and the free-flow of interesting activities, both indoor and outdoors enable them to share responsibility for their learning. They concentrate and persevere in tasks that stimulate them and demonstrate pride in their achievements. Children's behaviour is good and they are developing good turn taking skills as they negotiate for popular resources. However, some activities lack challenge for older and more able children who are ready to move on to the next stage in their learning. Children speak confidently and clearly in large and small groups, showing the ability to recall events. They display great curiosity and initiate conversations with other adults to find out who they are and what they are doing. Children's early writing skills are developing very well as they use marks readily to represent their ideas. They 'write' letters, putting them in envelopes to take home and write messages on 'post-it' notes, which they eagerly display. Older children confidently write their own names, forming recognisable letters and they talk knowingly about the letter their name begins with. Children delight in listening to well-read stories and explain that "In stories, people make it up in their heads and write it down". They select books, which they handle with care and respect, and enjoy 'reading' them to each other.

Children use numbers in a meaningful context during their play and in everyday routines. They know how old they are and demonstrate on their fingers how old they will be next. Children calculate how many place settings they need for snack and use mathematical language to describe volume as they fill up their containers with water. Children confidently name shapes, demonstrating that two semi-circles “make a round”. Children find out about living things as they grow and tend their plants in the outdoor area. They fill up their watering cans from the tap, explaining that “you need to give them water to help them grow”. Children competently use magnifying glasses to explore for insects, collecting them in ‘bug keepers’ to observe them closely. They use everyday technology in their play, such as telephones, tape recorders and torches. Children skilfully use the computer and have very good opportunities to develop their IT skills through the range of programmes.

Children enjoy talking about events in their own lives that are important to them; they excitedly discuss their experiences outside of the setting with staff, such as going to the local fair and which rides they liked best. Children readily talk about their feelings, expressing themselves competently and describe when they feel scared. Children thoroughly enjoy the range of creative activities, particularly painting outdoors using brushes, their fingers and potatoes to create their own designs. Children express their imagination by re-enacting familiar scenarios in the role play area; they gather resources, carefully make ‘sandwiches’ and take their ‘dogs’ on a picnic. Children sing simple songs from memory and enjoy making up new words to well-known songs in exuberant singing sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff respect and value children’s individuality and work very well with parents to ensure that the needs of all children are met. Children benefit from the setting’s strong emphasis of working with parents and carers. Thorough settling in procedures that are based around their individual needs helps to support children in the transition between home and the setting. Parents speak highly of the setting and staff. They receive clear and detailed information about the setting so they know about activities and events, and have daily opportunities to discuss their child with staff. This helps children to settle quickly and ensures their individual needs continue to be met. All documentation is in place to share information with parents and carers so that they know about the setting’s policies and procedures.

Children with disabilities benefit from caring one-to-one support, which enables them to participate at an appropriate level. Clear records are kept of children’s progress and staff actively work with parents, carers and other agencies to support the children’s needs, which ensure that they are fully included within the setting. Children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children have many opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them through a range of well planned activities. The good range of resources that positively represent the children who attend, as well as individuals from the wider community supports their play. In addition, children use a ‘comfort box’ where they place items brought from home, which they access during the session if they need

comfort or reassurance. This enhances their confidence and ensures they are settled and secure.

Children's behaviour is very good. They interact confidently with adults and their peers, learning to consider the needs of others and to work together co-operatively, for example, all children help each other to tidy up. Staff set clear boundaries, which helps children learn to negotiate with others and take responsibility for their own behaviour. For example, they use a sand timer and understand that this is to help them know when it is someone else's turn. Staff act as good role models, using positive language to reinforce the rules of the setting and as a result children work harmoniously together.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Staff actively seek parents' views about their child's needs, interests and achievements before the child starts, and on a regular basis throughout their time there. This contributes significantly to children's well-being in the setting. Children's records are available to parents on a regular basis and they meet regularly with their child's key worker to ensure that they know how their child is progressing and developing. Children regularly participate in the book lending scheme, so they can share stories with their parents. However, parents have fewer opportunities to support their child's learning at home. This means that children do not benefit from the sharing of activities with their parents that would further enhance their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a well-prepared environment that enables them to enjoy and achieve during their time at the pre-school. They are happy and content because staff develop warm and caring relationships with them. For example, an effective key worker system ensures that all children's needs are clearly known and met. Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that the staff have suitable qualifications and experience to work with children. Over half of the staff team hold early years qualifications and appraisals identify areas for professional development to further improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the needs of the children.

The good adult:child ratio enables staff to work flexibly to support children's learning in small groups and on an individual basis, when appropriate. Good settling-in procedures ensure that parents feel secure in the care their child receives and this means children settle readily and become confident members of the pre-school. All required documentation is in place and comprehensive policies underpin the good practice in promoting positive outcomes for children.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. The manager is very dedicated and demonstrates a real commitment to continually developing the setting's practice to ensure that all children have access to good quality learning experiences. Staff ensure that all parents have regular opportunities to discuss how their child is progressing and they are well informed about the Foundation Stage through parents' meetings and written information. Children benefit from the staff's

knowledge and understanding of how children learn and their ongoing commitment to further training to update their knowledge and practice. Staff work very well together as a team and demonstrate great enthusiasm for creating a learning environment that promotes positive outcomes for children. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the provider agreed to improve documentation. A full operational plan is in place, which is effective in ensuring staff are very well informed of their roles and responsibilities in supporting children's care and learning. All policies and procedures are available to parents so that they know about the setting, including the policy for sick children. A record of visitors is in place and completed appropriately. The improved documentation means that children's welfare is safeguarded.

At the last nursery education inspection, the provider agreed to improve creative activities and the programme for communication, language and literacy. Staff's efforts to improve these areas have been effectively addressed. As a result, children experience a good range of opportunities to explore their imagination and creativity, freely accessing many resources to develop their skills. In addition, children's early writing and reading skills are developing very well and they are making good progress in this area of learning. The provider also agreed to continue to develop the curriculum planning and children's assessment records. The planning now details a range of interesting activities and experiences, and children's records show how they are making progress towards the early learning goals. This has greatly improved children's learning as demonstrated in this inspection.

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- update the procedure for lost and uncollected children to ensure it is complete.

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):

- continue to develop activities so that older or more able children are consistently challenged
- continue to develop further opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning.

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