



Little Stones Pre-School and Out of School Clubs

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220270
Inspection date	26 June 2006
Inspector	Kelly Eyre
Setting Address	The Horsa Hut, Jacksons Lane, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 4LB
Telephone number	01933 276645
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Registered person	Little Stones Pre- School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

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

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Stones Pre-school and Out of School Club is run by a voluntary management committee. It opened in 1970 and operates from one main room in a single-storey building near the centre of Wellingborough. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The group provides three types of care facilities at different

times. The pre-school is open during term-time only and sessions are daily from 09:15 to 11:45 and 12:30 to 15:00. The out of school club is open daily during term-time and sessions are from 15:00 to 18:00 hours. Little Stones Holiday Club also operates from the same premises during school holidays and sessions are daily from 08:30 to 17:30 hours. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 65 children aged from two to under eight years on roll. Of these, 31 children receive funding for early education. The setting serves both the local and wider community. They currently support a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and are able to support children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs five members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment. There are effective daily hygiene practices which minimise the spread of infection and promote children's health, for example, children wash their hands before snack and lunch time. Children are effectively nourished and are generally offered healthy snacks, promoting their growth and development. These include a range of fresh fruits. Their special requirements with regard to health and diet are well documented and parents' wishes are respected. Clear records are kept of children's health needs, enabling staff to provide appropriate care.

Children enjoy a reasonable range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. They develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in activities such as music and movement sessions and action rhymes. They are temporarily unable to use the outdoor area, but planning and photos show that when this area is in use, children enjoy utilising equipment such as the climbing frames, tunnel and ride-on toys, enabling them to practice and improve their skills in these areas.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

There are general measures in place which promote children's safety, including ensuring that heaters are covered, children cannot gain unsupervised access to the kitchen, and the practising of emergency evacuation procedures. Tables and chairs are of the correct size and mean that children are able to access these independently. However, children's safety is compromised because they are able to access the electronic paper shredder and the water temperature in the wash basins

is not of an appropriate temperature and could cause injury to a child.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves safe. They are generally given explanations by staff to help them understand the relevance of safety rules, for example, they understand how to use scissors safely. Children have access to toys and play resources that are appropriate for their size and developmental stages. Staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and have experience in this area. However, their delay in recording and addressing a concern impacts negatively on children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Children are generally happy and settled. They are confident in their relationships with each other and with adults. They settle well when their parents leave because staff are experienced and confident, making sure that children receive individual attention and support at this time. Children attending the after school club are offered a sufficient range of activities which are stimulating and provide learning opportunities but also enable them to play and relax after a structured day at school. Their care is enhanced because staff take time to talk with them about their day and interests and also join in with their play, for example, a member of staff talks with children about a recent football match whilst helping them to set up a board game.

Evidence demonstrates that children attending the holiday club are offered an appropriate range of activities and play opportunities which help them to relax and enjoy their holiday but also provide stimulation and learning opportunities. Their activities include imaginative play, visits to nearby parks and shops, a range of craft activities such as mask-making and decorating pencil boxes, baking, and themed trips such as a 'mini-beast safari'. Their independence and choice are promoted because they are actively encouraged to say what activities they would like included in each holiday club, with staff members working hard to ensure as many of these ideas as possible are accommodated.

Children start the daily pre-school sessions constructively. They are confident in making choices about their play and activities. However, recent problems regarding staff shortages mean that children receive insufficient attention and support from staff who are unable to promote the learning and development of this age group. Children are not offered an appropriate range of activities because planning has not been completed. Children are therefore not purposefully occupied and their behaviour often degenerates during the session, with some children becoming disruptive. This results in an environment which is often noisy and disorganised and is not conducive to children's learning. The care provided for this age group does not therefore meet the regulatory requirement and ensure that children's needs are met.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Children are making poor progress and their development is not consistently promoted. Staff have a sound knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and are experienced in

implementing this successfully, as demonstrated by their previous inspection reports. However, their ability to use their knowledge and experience on a daily basis in order to promote children's development is severely hampered because they are over-stretched and there is little current planning of activities and sessions. For example, a member of staff reading to a small group of children continually has to interrupt the story in order to deal with other children who are arguing over toys or running around the room, minimising children's enjoyment of the story and the possibilities to extend this activity. There are clear procedures for assessing children, with staff carrying out an initial assessment of children's starting points. However, records of ongoing assessments do not give a clear picture of progress. This means that staff are not able to promote individual development, carry out thorough planning or to highlight areas of concern.

Current planning of activities is poor and the provision of many activities relies heavily on staff taking the initiative and introducing activities spontaneously during the session. This demonstrates the genuine caring nature of staff and their desire to do the best for children. However, it means that there is little consistency, resources are not always prepared, additional resources to support the activity are not provided and children's learning is not extended. An example of this is a member of staff introducing a music session which children enjoy but their learning is not extended because there are no instruments or resources to support the session and staff are unsure of the running order of the songs, meaning that there is some delay between songs, with some children losing interest.

Staff do not use effective methods to maintain children's interest, such as spending time working directly with the children, or making use of open questions. This means that children are inappropriately challenged. Organisation of group time does not encourage children's learning or help them to concentrate because staff do not stimulate interest. Children are unclear about the purpose of activities and frequently lose interest in a group session such as register time. Development is affected particularly in the areas of personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical development.

Children show skills in sharing and in organising their play but the lack of staff support means that these skills are not consistently developed, for example, a group of children organise an imaginary game involving birthday parties, happily taking turns at wrapping presents and organising parties until another child tries to join the game and is pushed away, eventually leading to arguments between the children and the break-up of the game. Children do not generally display high levels of involvement in the activities, becoming quickly distracted by other children or losing interest when resources are not available. They have few opportunities to show a pride in their achievements because the lack of planning means that they often run out of time to complete their tasks and work remains uncompleted.

Children's opportunities to develop their language for communication are limited. They are confident to initiate conversations and are able to speak to others in small groups and on a one-to-one basis but are often interrupted by other children and the conversation then becomes a fight to be heard, for example, two children talk with the inspector about snails they have made from construction set, when a further two

children attempt to join the discussion, they are not prepared to listen to each other, fighting for attention, becoming destructive and taking apart the construction pieces. Children enjoy stories on an individual basis and in small groups but find it hard to listen as a group due to the number of distractions. Some older children are able to link sounds to letters, name the letters of the alphabet and write their names. Clear labelling around the room means that children can see written words and letters but opportunities to understand these are not maximised by staff.

Children show an interest in mathematics and are beginning to understand that numbers carry meaning, for example, correctly counting the number of children present. Most children confidently use mathematical and positional language in their daily play and understand the meaning of this vocabulary, for example, discussing which doll is heaviest, and describing seating arrangements in an imaginary fire engine. Children currently have few opportunities to explore and learn about their environment. There are resources such as magnifying glasses available but lack of staff interaction means that children do not use these meaningfully. Children's awareness of their own culture and that of others is not consistently promoted because they are offered limited opportunities to participate in activities which would extend this knowledge.

Children's progress with regard to physical development is poor. They currently have very limited opportunities to use larger play equipment and to develop skills such as balance and co-ordination as they are temporarily unable to use the outdoor play area and there are no plans to demonstrate alternatives. They are offered some opportunities to participate in music and movement sessions and action rhymes which promotes the development of smaller physical skills. They are also competent in using small tools such as scissors, pencils and paint brushes. Children's creative development is fostered and they have opportunities to explore colour, texture, shape and form, for example, through activities such as painting, making collages, junk modelling and sand and water play. They use their imagination in art and role play, for example, a child draws a picture of a donkey and then makes up a story about this.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Children are treated as individuals and are welcomed to the group. However, their awareness of other cultures and development of positive attitudes is not promoted because they are not offered activities and opportunities to increase their understanding and appreciation in this area. Children attending the after school club behave well and are able to organise turn-taking and sharing. They are polite to each other and to staff, remembering to say 'thank you' at snack time.

The behaviour of children attending the pre-school is generally poor. Sessions begin calmly but behaviour deteriorates during the session as children become bored and are not purposefully occupied and challenged. Staff have low expectations of this age group and do not use appropriate strategies for managing behaviour, for example, a member of staff shouts across the room at two children arguing over a toy, then

removes the toy but does not offer any alternatives and very little explanation. Attempts have been made to introduce methods to promote children's understanding of the impact of their behaviour. For example, staff wear reversible badges with happy or sad faces and change these according to how children are making them feel. However, after a very brief explanation, all staff turn the badges to the sad faces but no further explanation is offered to children and the exercise has little meaning. The poor standards of behaviour and the lack of opportunities to understand and appreciate other ways of life have a negative impact on children's opportunities to learn and develop. Therefore, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents are given initial information about the setting and the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. They are kept adequately informed of their children's progress and activities through regular discussions with staff, access to their child's records and the use of notice boards. Staff show a good understanding of the needs of parents and feedback from parents demonstrates that this is appreciated.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Staff are experienced, qualified and have a high regard for children's well-being. There are effective procedures in place for checking that they are suitable to work with children. This is supported by an adequate staff induction procedure which ensures that staff are aware of all policies and procedures. Children have good relationships with the staff and turn to them for support and comfort. The progress and achievement of children in the pre-school are not always promoted because the setting has been severely affected by the recent staff shortages, planning has not been completed and the teaching methods and standards have declined.

Children's records and all paperwork are stored securely and are available for inspection. However, their safety and welfare are compromised because there is no operational plan and some policies and procedures do not contain sufficient detail to enable staff to act appropriately at all times. Children's safety and the overall organisation of the setting is further affected because there are no suitable arrangements to cover for staff sickness and staff breaks. This means that staff feel over-worked and are not able to complete planning, provide a range of appropriate activities and maintain care standards. Correct staffing ratios are not maintained when staff leave to collect children for the after school club, meaning that children's safety is again compromised and they are left in a vulnerable situation.

With regard to the provision of funded nursery education, leadership and management is inadequate. The manager has a clear understanding of education for young children and is committed to ensuring that all children are valued and respected. Staff are clearly aware of this and pay particular attention to making sure that all children are included. However, the manager has been ineffective in monitoring the provision and in securing adequate support to enable the group to plan and provide an appropriate range of activities. There has been a good

commitment to staff training, with all staff attending further courses to help them review and improve their practice. Children are happy and generally secure. However, the lack of planning and assessment means they are not always being stimulated and it is not possible to ensure that their development is promoted. Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection, the group was asked to define emergency evacuation procedures and to carry out fire drills. Evacuation procedures are now displayed in the entrance hall and main room, and fire drills are practised regularly, enabling children to become familiar with these and promoting their safety. The group was asked to develop staff's awareness of special needs and to ensure that the statement has regard to the Code of Practice (2001) for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. Staff have attended additional training and the statement has been updated accordingly, enabling staff to work appropriately with children who have special needs. The group was also asked to plan a range of activities and play opportunities for children aged five and upwards in the out of school clubs. Staff provided plans with a range of activities and ensured that this group had access to an additional range of resources, improving their play opportunities and learning.

At their least inspection of funded nursery education the group was asked to improve planning and assessment documents. These have been reviewed to show the links to the early learning goals. However, planning and assessment are currently not adequate and have been identified as areas of improvement in this inspection. They were asked to provide regular activities to reinforce children's learning in the areas of literacy, mathematics and awareness of other cultures and beliefs. Some activities have been provided but this remains an area of weakness. The group was also asked to develop the staff appraisal system. This has now been improved so that the training and development of staff can be promoted, thus impacting positively on children's well-being and learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

In May 2004 concerns were raised regarding the security of the setting, relating to National Standard 6 (Safety). Ofsted corresponded with the provider and was satisfied with the response. No further action was taken and the provider remains qualified for registration.

Concerns were raised in September 2005 following a visit from an Environmental Health Officer to the setting, relating to National Standard 7 (Health). Although the setting had met their requirements, concern was raised as to the length of time taken to implement the changes identified. The provider was asked to investigate and report back to Ofsted. They reported back, outlining how each of the required changes had been made to comply with the Environmental Health Officer's recommendations, and explaining that some changes required a refurbishment of the kitchen area which caused delay. However, all steps have been completed and the provider remains qualified for registration.

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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop an operational plan, ensuring this contains relevant details regarding all policies, procedures, planning and staff deployment so that staff are able to act appropriately at all times to protect children and promote their development; ensure that this is available to parents
- demonstrate how suitable arrangements will be in place to cover emergencies and unexpected staff absences, and show that suitable and sufficient staff are in place to cover staff breaks, holidays and sickness
- ensure that there are always a minimum of two adults on duty at all times
- improve children's safety by reviewing the risk assessment of the premises, identifying further risks and taking appropriate action. This includes ensuring that children do not have access to hazardous equipment (i.e. the electronic shredder) and includes ensuring that water in the wash basins is of an appropriate temperature
- demonstrate how you will develop staff's awareness and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour, taking into account their age and stage of development
- demonstrate how staff actively promote equality of opportunity, particularly with regard to the provision of activities and opportunities which promote children's understanding of this area
- ensure that all child protection concerns are appropriately recorded and addressed without delay, in accordance with the procedures as set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), and inform Ofsted when referrals are made.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

- plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities across all areas of learning - also applies to care
- develop planning and assessment methods to support improvement in the educational provision; ensure that these methods include sufficient detail to enable all staff to deliver the learning programme.

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

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

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