



## Little Owls

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY312276
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 May 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Heidi Falconer

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<b>Registered person</b>	The Board of Governors Histon Early Years Centre
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Owls is run by The Board of Governors Histon Early Years Centre. It opened in 2005 and operates from two rooms in a purpose-built building. It is situated in the village of Histon near Cambridge. A maximum of 80 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 48 weeks of the year. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 60 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 27

children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent procedures and routines are in place to ensure that children stay healthy and are protected from infection. Staff consistently wearing disposable gloves and aprons for nappy changing and they check the cleanliness of the toilets throughout the session to ensure high levels of hygiene are sustained. In addition, cleaning rotas are in place to ensure that all resources remain clean and suitable for children to use. Children learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as, washing their hands before snack or after using the toilet. They understand why they need to do so and clearly explain that they need to wash the 'germs' and 'mud' off their hands before they eat. Staff act as very good role models, washing their own hands and wiping down tablecloths with anti-bacterial spray before serving food, to help children to stay healthy.

Children are well cared for if they become unwell or in the event of an accident because excellent records are in place to make sure that appropriate care is given. Accurate details of children's allergies and medical needs are recorded and consent to seek emergency medical advice or treatment is in place for all children. All accidents are recorded promptly and special forms are used if a child bumps their head. This informs parents of any signs and symptoms which may occur later and that could suggest a more serious injury. The setting's sickness policy is informative and details symptoms of common childhood illnesses so that parents know what to look for if their child becomes ill. This helps to prevent the spread of cross-infection.

Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, meaningful experiences. The setting is part of a healthy schools programme and has gained a healthy schools award. Children talk to each other with understanding about foods that 'are good for you'; they know that fruit is good for them and that it helps them grow. Through sensitive discussions with staff, children are learning about food safety, they understand that some children have allergies and have alternatives such as Soya milk to prevent them getting ill.

Children are provided with healthy and balanced meals which appeal to them and are cooked on the premises. All food is well presented, nutritious and avoids large quantities of fat, sugar, artificial colourings and preservatives to ensure that children remain healthy. Small jugs of water and cups are provided in the room and children help themselves to drinking water whenever they need it so that they are well hydrated.

All children benefit from the strong emphasis on physical development and outdoor

play to ensure that they receive plenty of exercise to promote their growth and development. They enjoy a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities which promote their physical skills. For example, each day they play outside using an excellent range of equipment such as, a balancing wobble board, hoops, stepping stones, bikes and wind ribbons. The wide provision of well chosen resources ensures that activities provide sufficient physical challenges to children of all ages. Indoors all children have opportunities to use cutters, scissors, paintbrushes and other small tools to develop their small physical skills.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a light, airy and well-designed building. Great emphasis is given to making sure that the environment is welcoming for children to aid their development. The room is expertly set out before children arrive each day into clearly defined areas, such as computer area, music area and quiet area. The children move freely from one area to another, accessing equipment and activities independently. For example, children understand the purpose of the quiet room describing it as a place where they go 'when you want to be quiet'. In this room children independently choose books to look at and use the tape recorder to listen to music or stories.

All children have access to an extensive range of good quality, accessible and safe equipment. This ensures that all children can be engaged in purposeful activity and safely choose items themselves to promote their independence. Resources have been carefully chosen to support children's play and are regularly checked for hygiene and safety to ensure that they remain suitable. Chairs of varying sizes and styles ensure all children can be comfortable. For example, at the computer height adjustable chairs ensure that all children can sit safely and reach the computer without straining. The low-level accessible storage of equipment significantly enhances the children's independence and development.

Children are cared for in a very safe environment. Their risk of accidental injury is minimised because there are excellent safety and security precautions in place. For example, an intercom system and coded door locks prevent visitors entering the premises unannounced and creates a secure environment so that children are unable to leave the premises unaccompanied. Whilst the outdoor play environment does not prevent visitors entering it, staff are extremely vigilant in their supervision of the children and ensure that they are always in their sight. Locks on both sides of the gates prevent children being able to leave the play area without an adult. To further enhance children's safety outdoors, one area has been fenced off as a bike area to ensure that all children have appropriate space to play safely with their chosen activity.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe because staff alert them to potential dangers. For example, staff remind children not to climb on chairs in case they hurt themselves. In addition, staff provide activities that help children to learn about safety through practical experiences. For example, during their 'walk to school week' children will be asked to think about how they can keep themselves safe and

activities will be provided to support this.

Children are very well protected from abuse or neglect as staff have an excellent understanding of their role in child protection. Their wealth of knowledge and experience in this area means that they put effective procedures in place when necessary to ensure the safety of all children. Through the setting's policies parents are well informed of the group's duty to report concerns.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

All children arrive happy and are eager to attend the setting. They relish their time in the highly stimulating and very well resourced environment, which puts them first. Children play a dynamic part in the setting. They actively pursue their own interests and are extremely independent and highly motivated. The range of toys, books, games and creative materials is extensive and offers children a wide variety of different play opportunities. Staff's ability to act spontaneously to changes and children's interest ensures that there is always something new to capture their imagination. For example, on the day of the inspection the weather became windy, staff responded to this by providing the children with wind sticks, ribbons which are tied onto sticks. Children were enthusiastic about this activity and enjoyed running up and down the outdoor play area with the wind blowing through their ribbons.

Close and caring relationships throughout the setting increase children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self. Staff consistently interact with the children at a very high level to extend their learning and play. Children's confidence and self-esteem is developed through the praise they receive for their achievements. Staff value children's creations and do not make suggestions on how it could be better. For example, when children were drawing self-portraits for a tea towel design every child was praised and supported.

The youngest children make excellent progress because staff have a strong understanding of how children learn and how they can use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to create an environment where children thrive.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and use questions to challenge their thinking and language skills. However, at times staff miss opportunities to use everyday routines to enable children to extend their learning particularly with regard to counting, calculating and problem solving. Staff use effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements and to plan experiences that help children take the next step in their learning. As a result children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children show high levels of imagination as they use all of their senses to explore a stimulating range of new experiences. For example, when looking at section of

honeycomb, children were eager to touch and smell it. They are captivated by these new experiences are showing curiosity about the world around them. Children are inquisitive and fascinated by how things such as staplers and computerised microscopes work. Children have excellent opportunities to develop their IT skills. They have daily access to a computer and an interactive smart board which they use with increasing confidence. In addition children have regular access to programmable toys and they use other forms of everyday technology such as telephones and tills in their role play.

Children are extremely confident and have formed good relationships with each other and staff. They often seek out others to join in with their imaginary play. For example, in the water tray children work together using funnels and buckets to make 'porridge' and describe how they need 'dust and water' to make it.

A strong emphasis is placed on developing children's self-expression. Children are able to produce excellent drawings, pictures and models to represent their ideas. Recently children have used different techniques such as sewing, painting and drawing to create an attractive flower display. A 'make and do' area is available each day and this allows children to use a wide range of materials to produce models and pictures freely.

Children's spoken language is developing very well. They speak confidently and clearly in large and small groups, showing the ability to recall events. Children are aware that books carry information and show great interest in looking at them for pleasure and to get information. They are currently enjoying using the reference books to look at bugs and caterpillars. Children recognise their names and some initial letter sounds, sounding out letter to pictures to find their artwork. Children are encouraged by staff to write for a purpose, for example, when model making children write their names on stickers and attach them to their work.

Children begin to see connections and relationships in numbers, shapes and measures. They match and sort objects and are using mathematical language to describe the volume of water in their containers as they fill them up. They begin to use number in a meaningful context and understand that numbers represent sets of objects. For example, when using a calculator, children start to make connections between the numerals and their ages.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Staff respect children's individuality and offer extra support to enable each of them to participate at an appropriate level, and those with special needs are fully integrated. For example, some activities are adapted to ensure that all children can participate safely. Children with special needs are recognised and very well supported by experienced and caring staff. Records are kept of children's progress and shared with parents, carers and outside agencies to ensure that the children's changing needs are recognised and can continue to be met. To further support children with additional needs, extra resources are purchased which support specific identified needs.

The children have extensive opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them through planned activities, visitors to the nursery and outings to local places of interest. Children's play is supported by an excellent range of resources that positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. In their everyday play they use resources such as books, musical instruments, dressing up outfits, dolls and listen to different types of music which broaden their awareness of diversity throughout the world. Currently children show great excitement in listening and dancing to Asian music tapes. In addition, children learn about different cultures and beliefs through the celebration of festivals. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is helping them to develop a positive attitude to others.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. Staff set clear boundaries for the younger children in the setting and support them in sharing and taking turns with popular equipment such as the computer. Staff have high expectations and set consistent boundaries for the three and four-year-olds, which helps them learn to negotiate with others and take responsibility for their own behaviour. As a result older children know the rules of the setting and gently remind others of them. They know, for example, that they can't play in the water unless they have an apron on. Children of this age freely share and take turns with resources. For example, in the garden they dig with bulldozers and diggers and work as a team together to use the lorry's to take the mud away.

Children benefit from the setting's strong emphasis of working with parents and carers. Children benefit from good settling in procedures which are based around their individual needs, to support them in the transition between home and the setting. For example, prior to children starting staff carry out home visits and obtain detailed information about the child's individual needs. This helps children to settle quickly and become confident in the group. The group have a record of complaints, however, this is not appropriately available for parents on request. To further support parent's in the care of their children, the centre runs many groups such as family days, baby massage and general support groups where parents can discuss their child in a confidential environment.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is outstanding. An excellent partnership with parents contributes significantly to children's well-being in the nursery. Staff actively seek parent's views about their children's needs, interests and achievements before the child starts at the setting, and on a regular basis throughout their time there. Children's records are available to parent's on a regular basis to ensure that they know how their children are progressing and developing. Staff are keen to involve parents in their children's learning. They have set up maths games and book lending schemes and provide parents with 'activities at home' sheets. These inform parents of their current topics and suggests activities that they could enjoy at home with their children to support their learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The organisation of the setting promotes positive outcomes for the children who attend. The premises are well organised and exceptional use is made of the space available to provide children with access to an excellent range of well planned activities and interesting resources. Children are extremely happy and very confident in the setting. They have developed secure relationships with staff and are able to make decisions and pursue their own interests which contribute significantly to their enjoyment at the setting. The new staff team work extremely well together and demonstrate great enthusiasm for creating a learning environment that stimulates, excites and challenges children of all ages.

Children are cared for by well qualified staff that have been through rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures to ensure that they are suitable and have sufficient skills and knowledge to work with them. A comprehensive induction programme makes sure that all of the staff team are secure in their knowledge of their roles and responsibilities with particular regard to children protection and maintaining children's safety.

Policies, records and procedures are clear and comprehensive. Staff's knowledge and understanding of these clearly contributes to their implementation to ensure that children are safe and well cared for. There is a high emphasis on staff's professional development and they regularly attend childcare related courses. As a result children benefit from practices which are in line with current ideas and legislation.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding.

The head of the centre and the day care manager work very well together as a team and have a clear vision of the high quality childcare and education which they wish to provide. Their wealth of experience and expertise is shared with staff and has helped to create a child-centred environment where there is a high regard to children's personal development and achievement. The management team are keen to be part of new initiatives in the area to enable them to further enhance the setting for the children.

The management team have a clear understanding of their role in monitoring and evaluating the provision of the nursery education. Robust formal and informal systems are in place to look at the effectiveness of the provision. Through this evaluative and reflective practice they are striving for further improvement to continue to enhance children's experiences at the setting. The practice which takes place within this centre is worth disseminating beyond this setting. Overall, children's needs are met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There has been one complaint made to Ofsted since registration. The provider is



required to keep a record of complaints made by the parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

On the 02 March 2006 concerns were raised about staff's response when a child asked to go to the toilet. This concern relates to National Standard 2: Organisation and 12: Working in partnership with parents and carers. Ofsted asked the provider to conduct an investigation and report back. A response was received 20 March confirming that the incident did occur however, the provider has subsequently reviewed their policy for toileting children when they are outside in the garden. Ofsted therefore took no further action in this matter. The provider remains qualified for registration.

## **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 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):

- develop the complaints log so that records of complaints can be shared appropriately with parents.

#### **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 the use of everyday routines and activities to enable children to extend their learning, this relates specifically to problem solving, counting and calculation.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)