



Squirrels Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	404885
Inspection date	11 October 2006
Inspector	Jill Nugent
Setting Address	Broxbourne Centre, High Road, Turnford, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, EN10 6AE
Telephone number	01992 448593
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Registered person	Squirrels Day 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

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?

Squirrels Day Nursery at Broxbourne is one of two sister nurseries in Hertfordshire. It operates from a single storey building in Turnford, adjacent to Hertford Regional College. It is open from 08:00 until 18:00 every weekday and for 48 weeks a year. Children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

A maximum of 50 children may attend the setting at any one time. Currently, there are 96 children on roll, of whom 25 are funded for nursery education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 16 members of staff employed by the nursery. Of these, 12, including the manager, hold relevant early years qualifications. The nursery has recently achieved the Hertfordshire Quality Standards Award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well. Young children get adequate rest during the day so that they avoid becoming overtired. They sleep according to parents' wishes, in a buggy or cot, although staff are flexible with routines so as to take into account the needs of individual children. If older children need a rest after lunch they are able to lie down on mats out of the way of others. Children are protected from infection because any who become ill are taken away from the group and made comfortable while waiting for a parent. Children are excluded from the nursery if they have a contagious illness. Staff request all the necessary medical consents from parents. They ensure that parents are fully informed if children become ill whilst at the nursery or if any medication is administered. Therefore, children are safeguarded from a possible overdose. They are well taken care of in the event of an accident because staff are well qualified in first aid and have good access to appropriately stocked first aid kits. Consequently, children receive the correct treatment, and without delay. In hot weather, staff ensure that children wear hats to protect them from the sunshine. These procedures are effective in promoting children's good health.

Staff are particularly attentive to hygiene and children are cared for in clean surroundings. Good hygiene procedures are followed in the nappy changing areas and also in the milk room. This helps to keep very young children healthy and free from infection. In each room there are wipes and tissues at hand so that any mess can be cleared up immediately. All children wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating. Older children understand why handwashing is necessary and are beginning to use tissues independently. Consequently, children have a growing awareness of good hygiene.

Children enjoy a range of healthy meals. The weekly menu provides a well balanced diet with fruit and vegetables on offer every day. Drinking water is available to children in all rooms and also when playing outdoors. Children under the age of one bring their own food and drinks, so that they eat according to parents' wishes and avoid any allergic reactions. Children have their dietary needs met well as all adults are made aware of any allergies or special diets. These are catered for within the nursery menu, although some children prefer to bring their own food and this is stored in the fridge. Consequently, children with food allergies are well protected and specific needs are met. Older children learn about healthy eating during topics on 'food' and enjoy taking part in cooking activities. Overall, children are well nourished and becoming aware of a healthy lifestyle.

Children enjoy good opportunities for regular physical activity. They especially enjoy outdoor play in the garden where they have access to a range of resources, including a climbing frame, sand tray, bikes and balls. They have fun playing football and digging in the sand. They enjoy the fresh air and get plenty of exercise which helps to keep them healthy. When playing games

with staff they use a selection of small equipment, such as, bats and balls, and in this way develop new skills. Various planned garden activities, for example, travelling around an obstacle course, assist children in gaining self confidence on apparatus and equipment. Very young children are encouraged to crawl around, and begin to walk with the aid of baby walkers, or a helping hand from staff. They develop an awareness of their own bodies and become more confident to move around on their own. Overall, children benefit from these good opportunities for physical activity.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and secure environment. The rooms are all bright and offer an attractive setting for children, as staff have added colourful decorations and displays of art work in each room. Children are secure on the premises because the room doors have high handles, and, if going out to the toilet or to get coats, they are well supervised. There is a bell entry system on the main door and very good visibility to the outside so that visitors can be closely monitored from the office. The gate between the garden and college grounds is always padlocked so that children keep safe when playing outdoors. Consequently, children are very secure while on the premises. The outdoor climbing frame has been set on a safety surface so that children keep safe when using it. Staff promote children's safety through regular risk assessments of the premises and daily checks of the outdoor area. Potential risks are generally minimised appropriately. However, staff have a tendency to leave open the kitchen and laundry doors when these rooms are unoccupied, therefore posing a potential risk to children as washing powder is easily accessible in the laundry.

There are good fire precautions in place and all equipment is checked regularly to ensure that it is in working order. Children practise fire drills so that they are aware of what will happen in an emergency and what to do. Staff ensure that children's contact details are accessible in an emergency so that children can be collected if necessary. Children use safe, and suitable, resources and equipment. The nursery toys are all in good condition and checked weekly by staff. Any broken toys are discarded so that children can continue to play safely. Young children sleep safely in cots. They are checked every ten minutes and a baby monitor is set up to alert staff to any noises in between checks. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as they receive gentle reminders from staff, for instance, when attempting to climb on furniture. Older children are beginning to understand safety issues too, for example, the possibility that a shower of rain may cause the outdoor area to become slippery. Children all take part in road safety topics so that they can learn about keeping safe when out and about. Therefore, they have an increasing awareness of personal safety.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. All staff have attended relevant training. They have a procedure in place for recording any concerns and sharing these with the manager. She has the necessary information to enable staff to seek advice and, if necessary, to report a concern. The up to date information about the local safeguarding board is now also available on site. Consequently, children are well protected in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are well settled and generally play happily. Babies enjoy exploring a wide variety of colourful toys on a playmat and toddlers have fun with large soft shapes or shredded paper. Two-year-olds enjoy playdoh and construction activities. However, at times they lack active stimulation from staff to help them become involved in different play activities and this results in some aimless wandering around the room. When offered an exciting alternative, for instance, the opportunity to explore various musical instruments, children really enjoy themselves. All children in the setting relate well to others. Babies show much interest in other babies and older children often play together, choosing resources and chatting in groups. Children have good relationships with staff, for example, they enjoy play in the sand tray while a member of staff sits at their level playing alongside. They are gaining confidence and independence as they choose from resources set out in each room. Very young children explore floor play freely with good support from staff. Older children are confident to ask staff for help if necessary. Overall, children have adequate opportunities for taking part in a range of interesting play activities.

Children are involved in a variety of activities which support their development and learning. Staff are making good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan activities which help to develop children's skills. Children under two enjoy the company of staff members as they explore toys and learn to communicate. This adult involvement enhances their enjoyment and encourages new skills, for example, responding to music or balancing bricks. Two-year-olds are developing creative skills as they explore mark making and shape printing. They are beginning to use their imagination in play with small world settings, such as, a doll's house. Children are developing self esteem as they receive much praise for their attempts and achievements. They very much enjoy sharing books with staff, individually, and in groups. For example, a child learns about spiders while looking at a non-fiction book with an adult. Children's individual needs are met well. Babies enjoy a particularly stimulating environment and toddlers like to try new experiences, such as, food tasting. The two-year-olds are beginning to learn about new concepts in group times, although some lose interest as these do not always involve hands on learning with appropriate resources. Children's progress is assessed effectively and the planning is evaluated so that staff can monitor their ongoing provision. Overall, children are involved in a range of learning experiences which help them to gain knowledge and develop skills.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. They become very involved in their play and enjoy plenty of choice in free play sessions. They concentrate well, for example, when drawing pictures or trying to fit together small construction pieces. Children enjoy books and like to listen to stories read out loud. They listen carefully at group times and join in discussions with growing confidence. They are learning about the letters of the alphabet and their associated sounds. When drawing pictures, the more able children demonstrate particularly good early writing skills. Children are developing an awareness of mathematical concepts. They join in number rhymes, for example, 'five fat sausages', working out how many are left after a 'pop' and a 'bang'. However, the more able children have few opportunities to develop these skills further through calculating and problem

solving in play activities. Overall, there is a good range of learning opportunities in these areas, although children are not extended as effectively in mathematical development.

Children are learning about living things and their local environment. They discover a variety of facts about snails when looking closely at them, watching how they move and talking about their needs. They learn to represent what they see when recording their observations in detailed drawings. Children have good opportunities to explore water in different ways, for instance, playing with straws and bubbles. They have the freedom to develop their own ideas using art materials and so are developing good creative skills. For example, they happily paint and chalk pictures on large pieces of paper using a variety of different colours. They learn new techniques, such as, printing and rubbing, when using autumn leaves creatively. At group times they enjoy singing and participate enthusiastically. They are encouraged to extend their physical skills in organised activities, for example, using tools and doing exercises to keep fit. Overall, children are developing skills and progressing well in all learning areas.

Staff plan activities for each term around different topic areas and these show good coverage of the six learning areas. The weekly plans clearly show the learning intentions for children. Each activity plan includes details of how the activity is to be organised and adaptations for individual learning. This is very useful in helping to meet the needs of each child. The written plans offer various ways to extend the skills of the more able children in language and literacy but not always in mathematics. Staff also record spontaneous activities that occur during the week and evaluate all their planning so that they are aware if any learning areas have received less attention. They make very good use of all the activities to promote children's learning. They always explain concepts very carefully to children and ask open-ended questions to encourage children to think. They motivate children to be independent, for example, helping them to write their names through demonstrating and sounding out letters. Staff use group times effectively to focus learning about phonics and numbers or to review what children have done in a session. They ensure that children have good opportunities to be hands on, for example, feeling objects and thinking of words to describe them. Staff make regular observations on children's learning and assess their progress each term using a checklist. This system of assessment is useful in guiding their future planning. Overall, staff offer a stimulating learning environment in which children participate with enthusiasm and consequently learn effectively.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel valued and included. They are welcomed each day by the manager, and staff, and quickly find something to do. Staff take time to talk with them about their home lives and encourage quieter children to be involved in play with others. In this way, they are helped to feel valued as an individual. They develop a good sense of belonging. There is a gradual settling in procedure in place for all children which eases the settling in process for both children and parents. Children feel a part of a group and often attend the nursery for several years. Their photographs are all on display around the nursery. Older children have drawers in which to store personal belongings. If unhappy on arrival they soon calm down, as staff have a very friendly disposition and explain carefully what will happen before a parent returns. Consequently, children are very happy and self confident.

Children have their individual needs met well. Younger children have individual daily routines on display to ensure that their practical needs are met effectively. They enjoy extra attention in the form of cuddles and conversation if needing re-assurance at any time. Babies who are not yet moving independently are supported by staff sitting with them, or by large soft shapes, so that they feel secure and can see what's going on. Children have increasing personal independence and older ones are able to use the toilets independently. They are learning to make decisions through exercising choice, for example, from different foods at snack time. Children learn about diversity in a number of ways. They use various resources which reflect cultural differences, for example, jigsaw puzzles and dressing up clothes. They participate in activities planned around cultural and religious themes. In this way they learn to respect others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children play harmoniously together. They learn how to share fairly and are generally aware of their boundaries in the setting. Staff manage children's behaviour in a consistent manner. Young children who try to push the boundaries, at times, are presented with appropriate options, and in this way they can be praised for responding positively. They react well to staff's reminders, for instance, when asked to leave toys tidily and not to drop them on the floor. Consequently, they have a growing awareness of right and wrong. Older children behave extremely well. They line up carefully to go outdoors and show a sense of respect for adults. Overall, staff's management of behaviour encourages children to behave responsibly.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. The manager is well trained in this area and is familiar with procedures for recording close observations of children. They are given individual help if required and follow an individual education plan. The nursery maintains close contacts with parents and other professionals to ensure children's needs are met appropriately. Staff work closely with parents and carers at all times. Parents receive detailed information about the nursery's policies and procedures, including, for example, a typical day and a sample menu. They have access to information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework, which enables them to understand how staff work with young children. When collecting children they are able to read the details of their day with regard to sleep, food and nappy changes, on a large whiteboard. A link book is also sent home weekly so that parents can exchange information with staff in writing. Parents appreciate these methods of communication and are also able to make suggestions for staff to consider. This contributes to the nursery's continuing improvement. Children benefit from this good working partnership between staff and parents.

The partnership with parents and carers for nursery funded children is good. There is detailed information about the Foundation Stage of learning in the prospectus and on the notice boards. Other notices provide details of the current theme and the weekly plans are displayed inside the classroom. In this way parents are kept aware of what their children are learning. Occasionally staff send home ideas for activities so that parents can become more involved if they wish. Parents are invited to regular consultations in order to exchange information with staff about their children's progress. When children leave, parents receive a very attractive book containing photographs and observations from their children's time at the nursery, and also a summative report on their progress within the Foundation Stage. Overall, the nursery communicates well with parents so that they can feel involved in their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery's policies and procedures work well in practice to promote the outcomes for children. All the necessary policies are in place. Each room has its own policy file and a printed daily routine is on display. All information about children is stored securely in the office. The manager promotes good communication between staff members through the provision of a staff notice board in each room. All written plans are kept neatly in files and therefore easily accessible. Registers are generally well maintained, although not all parents sign their children in when they arrive. Consequently, there is a period of time before registers are taken when there is no record of attendance for some children. These children are potentially at risk in an emergency as there is no way of checking who needs evacuating from the building. Children are always signed out when they leave. On the whole, the nursery's paperwork provides a sound basis for staff's practice and contributes effectively to keeping children healthy and safe.

The nursery is committed to continual improvement through training. Staff are well qualified and have recently attended training in 'Birth to three matters', literacy and numeracy, as well as courses attached to the Quality Standards Award. There are good procedures in place for the employment and induction of new staff. Staff have a formal appraisal each year and are encouraged to attend training courses in areas of interest, and areas which will benefit the nursery. Children's care and education is enhanced through their acquired knowledge and understanding. Overall, children's needs are met.

Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children. They always ensure that the daily information about children is recorded on the white board and they work directly with children in order to promote their enjoyment, health and safety. They make good use of the space available in the nursery. There is a large welcoming entrance hall and four main rooms for children, each allocated to a different age group. The older children have good access to the toilets and also the garden. The daily rota works well in providing times for free choice, group work and outdoor play. In this way, children can feel well supported and secure in staff's care. The manager monitors the whole provision to ensure that standards are maintained in all rooms. However, the overall organisation is not always effective in providing extra support for staff when needed, in terms of the organisation of resources and deployment of adults. This has resulted in some two-year-olds not having sufficiently stimulating play activities at times.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager oversees the planning of the programme, which is devised by the room leader in consultation with other staff. The room leader is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and ensures that areas requiring further development are addressed whenever possible. The nursery manager checks that children's individual needs are always met through this programme. She monitors the children's education closely and is aware of possible areas for improvement in the future. There are exciting plans for the nursery to be included in a new children's centre and the nursery manager has the task of co-ordinating this project. She intends to make optimum use of this opportunity to extend the nursery education on offer. The effective leadership of the programme successfully promotes a good nursery education for all children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the nursery was asked to update the policies on Behaviour Management and Child Protection in order to reflect their practice. These policies now include all the necessary information.

At the previous education inspection the nursery was asked to provide training for staff in the Foundation Stage of learning and develop the planning so as to, make the learning objectives clear, and include differentiation. They were also asked to offer more opportunities for children to explore mark making, learn about sounds and letters, and calculation. Staff now have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and include the appropriate detail in their planning. There are also good opportunities for children to explore mark making and learn about sounds and letters. Opportunities for learning about calculation have not yet been developed to the same extent. Overall, these developments have contributed to an improvement in the educational programme.

Complaints since the last inspection

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

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

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):

- ensure children's safety with respect to the kitchen and laundry areas
- review the organisation of resources and deployment of staff to ensure that the needs of two-year-olds are met effectively
- ensure that there is an effective system in place for recording children's attendance at all times.

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):

- provide further opportunities for the more able children to increase their skills in the area of mathematical development.

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