



Willow Tree Day Nursery Limited

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	650008
Inspection date	11 January 2007
Inspector	Lynn Denise Smith
Setting Address	Chingford Avenue, Great Clacton, Essex, CO15 4US
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Registered person	Willow Tree Day Nursery Ltd
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Willow Tree Day Nursery and Children's Centre is privately owned. It opened in 1988 as a day nursery and in 2006 as a children's centre and operates from a large building comprising of adjoining demountable classrooms and new buildings. It is situated in Great Clacton. A maximum of 143 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open five days per week from 07.45 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. All children share a number of enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 270 children aged from birth to under eight years on roll. Of these 136 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a large geographic area surrounding Great Clacton. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The children's centre is run and operated by the owner of the day nursery who is fully supported by an effective management team comprising of an administrator, a receptionist and the day nursery manager. A part time support teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership works within the setting for two and a half days per week and provides support for the day nursery staff. Very effective links are in place with other agencies connected with health, early years and the job centre.

The nursery employs 40 staff working with the children and five support staff. Of these, 21 including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Six staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health needs are effectively met as staff follow the nursery's sound procedures on health and hygiene. Children are enthusiastically encouraged to wash their hands before snacks and meals and after using the toilet. Older children are reminded to do this through fun, visual aids which are presented at their height in the children's toilets. Staff act as good role models with regards to hygiene as they are seen washing their hands before preparing snack and cleaning all tables and surfaces with anti-bacterial spray in between uses. The low level presentation of some communal towels used for drying cups and plates after snack time causes some confusion for children. They occasionally use these to dry their hands on instead of the paper towels which are also provided.

Children's medical needs are very effectively met as staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the children's individual needs. They follow the parent's wishes with regards to meeting their children's medical and health needs. A clear log of any accidents or medication given during the nursery day is made and shared with the children's parents to ensure they are fully aware of any incidents. The nursery has a rolling programme of first aid training in place to ensure that there are always qualified first aiders on site at all times.

Younger children's personal needs are effectively met as staff follow their own home routines and work closely with the parents to keep abreast of any changes in their diet, sleep patterns or medical conditions. Staff effectively use the 'Birth to three matters' framework as a basis for the care provided in the younger section of the nursery.

Children's dietary needs are very well met as the nursery has adopted a policy of healthy eating. All meals are prepared from fresh ingredients and there is an interesting and nutritious menu available which is alternated on a weekly basis. Children may also bring a packed meal to nursery if their parents do not want them to have a cooked meal at lunchtime. All children sit together and share their lunchtime experience with staff. They enjoy gentle conversation and talk about their morning. Children are provided with a wide and exciting range of snacks throughout their day. The snacks usually comprise of foods such as fresh fruit, vegetables, crackers and bread sticks. Some children are encouraged to play an active role in preparing their snack, by pouring

their own drinks and buttering their own crackers, however this practice is not consistent throughout the nursery.

Children help themselves to fresh drinking water throughout the day.

Children of all ages have very good opportunities to experience fresh air on a daily basis. They play in one of the many outdoor areas of the garden and sometimes access the play park situated close to the nursery. Children are taken for walks in the local area. Children excitedly experience all types of weather as parents are asked to send their children to nursery in appropriate clothing, such as, Wellington boots in the winter and sun hats in the summer.

Children's physical development is well promoted both indoors and outdoors. They are provided with an excellent selection of large and small scale physical play equipment to explore and master. Children learn about negotiating space when they run around in one of the many outdoor areas and when they participate in music and movement sessions whereby they are encouraged to find a good space to move around in. Children's fine motor development is encouraged through the use of a wide range of tools and resources, such as, pens, scissors, dough cutters, puzzles and glue spreaders. Children have fun enthusiastically participating in an indoor movement session whereby they are encouraged to act out being a hedgehog, a butterfly a tree and a cat. They consider ways of moving to make their body take on the required shape and learn about how their body feels afterwards by placing their hands on their tummy to feel themselves breathing in and out.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a very well organised, bright and attractive setting. The nursery has evolved during its life through three main phases. All sections of the nursery are interlinked and staff have worked hard to create a consistent feel throughout the nursery. Children and visitors enter the nursery through a main entrance which leads into a bright and attractive reception area which is always supervised. They are cared for in one of seven main playrooms which are named as follows, the Baby Room, Blossoms, Catkins, Sunflowers, Willows, Bluebells and Buttercups. Children aged over three years are cared for in the Willows, Bluebells and Buttercups rooms. All rooms are bright and attractive and the walls are decorated with examples of the children's creative achievements as well as colourful and attractive posters. Children have great fun looking at the 'Enchanted Garden' which is situated in the centre of the building. They excitedly spot the fairies and a selection of plastic insects who live in the garden and are encouraged to contribute new items from their travels. The contents of the garden are changed regularly and children are encouraged to try to spot various items of interest in this garden, for example hand written posters ask them 'can you spot the six grasshoppers who have hopped into our garden?'.

Children are provided with additional play spaces such as the training room, which can be used for large physical play when not being booked out by other users and the 'Kito' room, which is a small room which is used for one to one activities. This room was named after the baby elephant born at a local zoo and adopted by the nursery.

Children safely access a full and exciting selection of toys and play equipment in all seven of the playrooms. Low level storage encourages children to self-select resources and the storage boxes used to house the toys are generally well labelled, some inconsistency can be observed in the effectiveness of the labelling throughout the nursery.

Children are safe within this nursery as the staff follow clear and effective written procedures with regards to ensuring the premises and equipment are safe and well maintained. Daily checks carried out before the children arrive to ensure that they are welcomed into a safe, secure and inviting environment.

Children are effectively protected from potential harm as the setting ensures that all staff received up to date child protection training and advice. All visitors to the premises are monitored and are required to sign in and out of the building. Visitors who have contact with the children are always fully supervised by the nursery staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children throughout this nursery thoroughly enjoy their pre-school experiences. They become actively engrossed in a wide range of exciting activities. Babies being cared for in the baby room enthusiastically enjoy floor play with an extensive range of age and stage appropriate toys and play equipment. They watch their reflection in a well positioned safety mirror and pull themselves up using the toys and equipment presented around the room. They enjoy the interaction they receive from the adults caring for them and chuckle with laughter when a member of staff plays a game of 'hide and seek' with a child. Staff enthusiastically respond to their coos and gurgles and encourage two way conversation.

Children of all ages enjoy having the opportunity to experience role play when they actively play with the kitchen equipment, cups, plates and play food. Children as young as a year old are encouraged to play purposely with this equipment as staff promote their imaginative development through appropriate language and by reciprocating their offers of food and pretending to eat it. They play with dolls and push them around in their buggies and have a range of dressing up clothes to wear.

Children have fun participating in creative play. They experience a variety of painting opportunities, sticking, dough, corn flour play and 'gloop'. Staff encourage children to experience a wide range of sensory activities which enables them to experience smells, tastes and textures without the need to create and end product. Children thoroughly enjoy water play and learn about weight and measure as they play with sand and other natural materials.

Children have both quiet and active times throughout the day as staff plan effectively to ensure that children's individual routines are accommodated as closely as possible within a nursery setting. Staff generally use time and resources efficiently to enable children to gain excellent experiences from their nursery day.

The needs of children aged under three years are well met as staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of their individual requirements and support this practice by using the guidance

within the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Effective planning is in place and covers all aspects of the framework; children's achievements are well documented and used to plan for their next stage of development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage and can articulate their knowledge well. They understand how children learn and develop and put this knowledge into practice when planning an effective curriculum. Long, short and medium term planning covers all six areas of learning and superbly demonstrates how the curriculum is extended indoors and outdoors. Adult led activities are prepared by individual staff for use in all three of the rooms which cater for this age group; these activities are evaluated to show whether children achieved the planned learning outcome and if not why. Staff competently demonstrate a clear understanding about providing adequate challenges for children and acknowledge that their plans need to show differentiation for more and less able children.

Staff organise an effective daily routine which enables children time to experience free play, outdoor play, circle times and structured activities. Visual time lines are used in each room to enable children to gain an understanding of time and to feel comfortable about what is going to happen next.

All children are fully included in all activities and staff encourage children to 'have a go' at everything available to them. Those needing additional help are identified through the nursery's clear systems of observation and appropriate help is provided. Children learn in a calm and relaxed environment which helps them to make progress in all areas of learning. Good behaviour is encouraged through positive praise from the staff and through the presentation of certificates for helping and showing kindness to others.

Children are happy and confident in their play. They chat freely to each other and develop caring and warm relationships with the adults caring for them. They enter into conversations about their families, pets and interests. Children's personal independence is encouraged through the use of the independence doors cut into the larger doors leading to the toilets and wash hand basins. These enable children to access the toilets on their own and to get their own coats and boots on ready for outdoor play. Children persist at activities for a prolonged period of time, for example, when completing large floor puzzles or when transporting the sand from one end of the sand tray to the other. Children are affectionate and enjoy the warm and caring interaction they receive from the staff. They are reminded about being good and kind to each other through the visual reminders displayed around the nursery and through the positive language used by staff, for example, 'we have a new friend at nursery today'.

Children are confident speakers; they use language appropriately to describe real and imaginary stories in their life. Children have good opportunities to develop their pre-writing skills when they make use of the range of mark making equipment which is on offer at all times, indoors and outdoors. Children tell staff about a piece of news they want to share each day which is then written into their news books. Children then illustrate their news and some are beginning

to form letters and words in their books. Children are linking sounds to letters, for example, when a child informs his friends that H is for Hannah, his sister. Children enjoy listening to stories in large group and on a more individual basis, they repeat sections from favourite stories and can re-tell some well known stories.

Children enthusiastically use numbers in a range of activities throughout the nursery. They count the numbers of children and enter into discussions around simple calculations, for example, they decide that the two groups of children in the Willows room have the same amount of children in each. Children enjoy playing with a wide range of toys and resources which provides them with opportunities to use mathematical equipment. They learn about weight and measure when they participate in cooking activities. They weigh the ingredients and follow the recipes; observing how the mixture changes when other ingredients are added and when the mixture is mixed.

Children excitedly learn about the natural world when they explore animals and insects through the various topics planned. They learn about caring for animals such as the pet rabbit and her babies with the help and support of the staff. Children have excellent opportunities to learn about growing when they plant seeds and flowers in the various garden areas. Children have exciting opportunities to learn about people who help them when they are visited by a range of visitors such as police officers, the window cleaner, a fisherman and a hairdresser. Children construct with a range of materials and build for a purpose when they make models of their houses from cardboard boxes and junk modelling equipment.

Children are very creative, they self-select a range of creative play materials from the selection presented and are encouraged to create pictures and collages using their own ideas and suggestions. Children's creative work is effectively displayed around the premises. Children express themselves through music and singing and enjoy joining in with favourite songs and rhymes. Children excitedly participate in role play and enjoy making good use of the dressing up clothes. They listen to a wide range of music and have opportunities to participate in a selection of different dancing activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs are extremely well met by caring and considerate staff who take valuable time getting to know the children and their family set up. Their parents play an active role in informing staff about their needs, likes and dislikes through the documentation they complete and through ongoing open discussions with their children's key workers. Children's individual needs are at the forefront of this nursery's practice as observed throughout the nursery which enables them to receive excellent quality care and education. Children are valued and respected and develop a secure feeling of belonging within the setting. They know the premises well and are encouraged to take pride in their rooms by helping to clear away the toys at the end of the session and by looking after the toys and equipment.

Children have excellent opportunities to learn about other people's customs and religions through the celebration of festivals and special occasions. They enthusiastically learn about how people live in different countries through the nursery's links with schools in Finland, Mexico

and Ireland. Finish students come to work in the nursery on a regular basis and spend a day preparing Finish meals and activities. Positive images of all kinds of people are reflected in posters, toys and books throughout the nursery. A number of children speak English as a second language; staff encourage their families to share some important key words with them which are then displayed around the nursery and used to help the children feel settled and comfortable.

Children who need additional help are extremely well integrated into nursery life. They enjoy experiencing the full and exciting range of activities on offer throughout the nursery. Excellent verbal and written communication between the parents and staff ensures that parents are kept fully informed of their children's progress and staff are made aware of any changes in the children's lives. Successful links with outside agencies such as speech therapists and physio therapists enables children to receive high quality care and to develop in an environment in which they are valued and important.

Children behave extremely well at this nursery as they are fully guided and well supported by the calm and relaxed staff team. They learn to cooperate and share well as staff talk to them in a clear and effective manner and encourage them to think about how they are feeling. Children understand the nursery boundaries, for example, they listen to the staff when asked to and follow their instructions. Staff act as exemplary role models speaking to each other in a nice manner and being considerate of each other's needs.

Children's well-being is superbly enriched as the parents and staff develop excellent working relationships. Parents are provided with an enormous amount of information both verbally and through the presentation of posters and displays. The written information is well organised so as not to appear overwhelming. Staff show high regard for the parent's views and clear procedures are in place to enable parents to share relevant information about their children.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding.

Parents play a very active role in their children's pre-school education. They inform staff about their children's abilities at home through a system of both verbal and written information. They have open access to their children's profiles, which contain relevant information about the activities they have participated in and the progress they are making. Parents are invited to arrange to attend the nursery for an informal coffee morning at a time which is convenient to them. They book some time with their children's key worker and the key worker ensures that cover is in place to provide the parent's with the time and support they need. Parents receive information on a daily basis about the activities the children have participated in each session and what learning outcome they have achieved or demonstrated through the various activities. This information is shared verbally and also by using the white boards in the rooms for three to five year olds. Parents receive regular newsletters which enable them to be actively involved in their children's learning. The newsletters provide an excellent forum for sharing the topics and themes which the nursery intends to cover over the following half term. Parents become involved in arranging trips and activities for the nursery's bear who goes to visit the children in their own homes and sometimes goes on holiday with them. Parents provide a short account of the time the bear spends with the family and provides photographs to share with the other children.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are independent and confident in their surroundings. They develop good relationships with each other and with the adults who care for them. Their understanding of other people's needs is extended and promoted through positive images in posters and resources and through the celebration of festivals and special occasions.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children are cared for by an extremely caring and committed team of staff, some of whom have worked at the nursery for the majority of its existence. The staff team comprises of a generous mix of both mature and younger staff, all of whom are valued and play an active role in the day to day effective running of the setting. Clear and robust procedures are in place to ensure that staff hold appropriate qualifications and experience and are vetted and cleared to work with children. Staff are actively encouraged to draw upon their own strengths and to incorporate their interests into the day to day life of the nursery, for example one member of staff is interested in teaching dancing and is in the process of incorporating this interest across all ages of children.

The required adult to child ratios are consistently exceeded throughout the nursery providing children with excellent individual attention both from their key workers and from the other adults working within their rooms. The effective key worker system ensures that children are superbly supported and their parents are provided with valuable information about their progress.

Children flourish as staff organise the premises and space in an effective way. The furniture and equipment used is age and developmentally appropriate and some of the newer equipment such as tables can be adapted to meet the needs of both younger children and children who attend the out of school facility.

Meticulously high standards of records and written procedures support all practices within the nursery. Documentation is stored efficiently and the administrative manager who works in the office ensures that the records required for registration purposes are up to date and well maintained. Parents are kept fully informed about the day to day running of the setting through ongoing verbal and written information.

The children's centre is being effectively used by a number of organisations within the community, such as, the local childminding network group, the baby clinic, sure start, health visitors, parenting groups, baby massage sessions, teenage parenting group, stop smoking coordinator, healthy eating coordinator, breast feeding group and the schools admission team. Various courses are being held in the training room and some of the trainers are also making use of the kitchen to promote healthy eating and cooking for parents. Links with a number of other agencies are being developed, for example, the job centre has a board within the setting to advertise their role and has been invited in to the nursery to run a session for interested parties. The owner of the nursery and children's centre is very involved with the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and is keen to progress any suggestions for the centre made through these forums.

Leadership and management is outstanding.

The owner and management team work effectively together to ensure that the nursery is operating to extremely high standards. They have a clear vision based on meeting the individual children's needs and providing very individual care for every child and their family. They are very forward thinking and constantly review their practices to ensure that they are maintaining the high standards already practiced throughout the setting. All staff play an active role in evaluating the nursery's practices and are encouraged to suggest new ways of dealing with situations if they feel this would benefit the children.

Staff are very motivated and enthusiastic about their work. They constantly strive to develop an understanding of new ideas and practices and enjoy participating in training organised through outside agencies or as in-house activities. Staff meet regularly to discuss working practices, ideas and the care of individual children. They play an active role in planning and organising activities and play opportunities and are valued for their contributions.

Staff development is valued and encouraged throughout the nursery. A clear and effective appraisal system is in place which enables staff to inform their line managers about their interests and areas which they would like to pursue. Staff have clear defined breaks away from the children throughout the day, enabling them to return to the children refreshed and eager.

The nursery team has some clear plans for the future, such as, developing the outdoor area by planting trees and creating an allotment whereby the children will grow their own produce to use in the setting's meals and snacks. They plan to further develop links with local schools and businesses and to make full use of the mini-bus which they have recently purchased. Some additional activities may soon be provided for the children, such as, dance sessions and football coaching for children aged under five years.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection the nursery was asked to update staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures by attending training. Children are now effectively protected from potential harm as staff have undertaken a number of child protection training courses. They were also asked to maintain a written record of all complaints in accordance with 12.3 of the Addendum to the National Standards. The nursery now has a complaint log now in place and records all concerns raised by parents.

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 outstanding.

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 well-being is consistently promoted throughout the nursery with regards to the standards of good hygiene practices and children's independence.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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