



The Strawberry Patch

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY245165
Inspection date	04 January 2007
Inspector	Pauline Margaret Todd
Setting Address	Becketts Farm, Hempstead, Norfolk, NR25 6LB
Telephone number	01263 711229
E-mail	
Registered person	Emma Marsh
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?

The Strawberry Patch Nursery and Pre-school opened in 2003. It is a privately owned facility and operates from a log-cabin style building which is located on a retired family farm in the rural village of Hempstead just outside the town of Holt, Norfolk. A maximum of 98 children may attend the facility at any one time. Holiday care is provided for children up to eight years of age. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 until 18.00 all year round. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 142 children aged from three months to eight years on roll. Of these 37 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 18 childcare staff. Of these, 14 including the owner/manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted effectively because the setting takes reasonable steps to ensure the premises and play equipment are clean and well maintained. Children are learning about good hygiene practices and becoming increasingly independent in their personal care. They use the toilet and hand-washing facilities independently. Photographs remind them to flush the toilet and wash their hands afterwards. The more-able children help to wash up after snack time and wipe the tables. Staff follow hygienic procedures when changing nappies, for example, they wear disposable gloves and dirty nappies are immediately placed in the disposal unit to prevent the spread of infection. Potties, which are washed and disinfected after every use, are readily available for younger children who are in the process of toilet training. Spare clothes are provided for accidents and staff change children immediately to make sure they remain clean and comfortable. Pets are hygienically kept, for example, the rabbits and guinea pigs are in hutches outside and the hamster is in a cage in the play room.

Children's health details and medical requirements are clearly recorded to maintain their good health. However, permission has not been obtained to seek emergency medical advice or treatment for children to ensure parents' wishes are followed. Staff follow effective systems which enable children who are unwell to be cared for appropriately. Positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, for example, posters are displayed to remind parents of the exclusion periods following sickness and diarrhoea. Sufficient staff have current first aid knowledge to ensure children's well-being in the event of an accident and detailed records are kept.

Children are provided with nutritious, balanced meals and snacks which are properly prepared on the premises. They enjoy eating crackers and cheese at snack time and meat pie and vegetables at lunch time. Children learn about healthy foods by eating fruit such as bananas and apples. They undertake activities to help them develop their understanding of what foods are good for them, for example, making smoothies. Children with specific dietary requirements have their needs met appropriately because the parents have provided the setting with detailed information, for example, wheat and egg allergies. Children pour their own drinks at snack and meal times. However, they cannot help themselves to fresh drinking water at all times to make sure they drink sufficient amounts during the day to keep them healthy.

The babies sit comfortably in high chairs or on low nursery chairs at the table to eat. They are beginning to feed themselves using their fingers and spoons. When babies are being bottle fed they are held comfortably by staff who make it a pleasurable experience for them.

Children are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They learn the importance of physical exercise and experience fresh air daily. They use climbing frames, slides and rockers by accessing the outdoor areas adjoining their play rooms independently. They use balls, hoops and ride-on

toys confidently. The older funded children use large wooden physical play apparatus on the field which provide them with challenge. They climb competently using steps and foot holds and use a range of balancing equipment. They demonstrate good control, coordination and spatial awareness as they pedal forwards and backwards on the bikes without bumping into each other. They exercise to pop music in the large activity room at the start of their session. They are developing competent manipulative skills, for example, by using paint brushes and 'small world' toys during their activities. Older children fulfil their own needs with regard to rest and relaxation and use comfortable cushions on the floor by the book corner. After lunch, some children sleep in the quiet room on beanbags and mattresses which promotes their well-being.

Young children are developing their independence physically and emotionally. They are active and are acquiring good control over their bodies as they move around the room. They crawl through tunnels, into the soft ball pit, use rockers, slides, push and pull along toys. They roll and move on the activity mats and pull themselves up on the furniture. The staff provide appropriate activities and resources to support the children's physical and emotional development, for example, by making dens from blankets. Babies are able to sleep undisturbed in cots in the sleep room.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children of all ages benefit greatly from being cared for in a nursery that is very homely, warm and welcoming. Pleasing use is made of the space available with separate rooms to cater for the different needs of children. The colourful displays of children's work posters on the walls and friendly music playing in the background help children to feel secure and at ease in the setting. There are mirrors, mobiles and good visual displays to stimulate babies' curiosity and encourage them to focus.

Children use a wide range of developmentally-appropriate resources. Items of play equipment are available from low storage units and trays to encourage self selection and independence, for example, construction, 'small world' toys and craft materials. There is sufficient equipment and furniture to meet the varying needs of the children attending, for example, activity centres, gyms and baby rings which are secure and comfortable to support babies during rest and play. Suitable furniture allows groups of children to sit comfortably to eat and take part in activities. All children use child-sized utensils and crockery at meal and snack times.

Children are kept safe because staff give them good supervision and are vigilant, for example, they sweep up the straw and peat spilt from the trays during the day, and they ensure harnesses are used for babies' feeding chairs. The owner uses extremely detailed risk assessments and daily checklists to reduce potential hazards, for example, electrical items are tested annually, suitable procedures are available regarding outings. The various outdoor surfaces are all in good condition to promote children's safety and enjoyment. All staff members have a clear understanding of their roles to ensure children's safety in an emergency. Fire drills are practised regularly.

Children's welfare is adequately safeguarded because staff have a sound working knowledge of child protection procedures. They attend ongoing training to improve their awareness. They have access to relevant documentation and details of referral routes if they suspect that a child in their care is being abused or neglected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's welfare is promoted successfully because they undertake a wide range of activities and play opportunities that develop their emotional, social and intellectual capabilities. They are happy and well-settled. Children play with a varied selection of activities which are put out for them, for example, collage using shiny paper and coloured sand, and painting. They enjoy playing with vehicles in the peat and straw with the farm animals. They giggle as they draw each other's faces and are excited when they manage to hang a hoop from a branch on the tree outside. They use their imagination well, for example, when playing with construction materials and taking part in role play using dressing-up clothes. They pretend to prepare breakfast for their babies.

The staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to positively promote the development of young children. The babies and toddlers enjoy investigating the properties of jelly, corn flour and shaving foam. They choose from construction, puzzles, shape sorters, stacking cups, large threading and place boxes inside each other which encourage them to think and work things out for themselves. They use play mats and cushions which are tactile and equipment which is visually appealing and promote use of their senses.

Children respond positively to adults who are interested in what they do and say. They are forming close relationships with the staff who are very friendly and give them a great deal of support, for example, they show them how to use the glue stick during the collage activity, help them use sellotape to make musical instruments and encourage them to make a scarecrow from the construction pieces. Staff show enthusiasm and use their sense of humour well to make the day fun for all the children attending. Babies and toddlers receive lots of cuddles which help them to form positive attachments, for example, when waking up or going to sleep. Staff maintain good eye contact, use facial expressions and gestures well to encourage communication.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals to help funded children make progress. Children are questioned effectively to help them learn, for example, 'what are we going to build?', 'What do you need to make a caterpillar?', 'How does it feel?' However, when funded children are using the pre-school room the staff do not always structure the environment to enable them to take the initiative, operate independently or choose activities for themselves. The children regularly spend time undertaking adult led large group activities. The staff plan themes for the term which are shared with parents, for example, nursery rhymes. The learning intentions of the activities are shown but the plans do not clearly demonstrate how the activity will be extended to provide further challenge for the more-able children. Staff observe children regularly. This

is linked to the planning of activities through ongoing sheets which show the steps children are working towards. Examples of children's work and photographs are kept in scrap books which are used to share children's progress with their parents.

The areas of learning are consistently covered. Children are keen to learn and eager to take part in activities, for example, painting, shaving foam and puzzles. They are keen to discuss what they did during the holidays, for example, they say they 'went to the Pantomime'. They concentrate and sit quietly while undertaking card games and listening to stories. They are forming good relationships with other children and take turns to use the computer. They discuss their families with staff and each other during their activities. Children interact well, for example, they say 'this is for Betty's lunch' and 'I need a blanket for my baby'. They listen to questions and respond to simple instructions, for example, to put the cards away. They recognise familiar words such as the days of the week and their own names. Staff help them link sounds to letters, for example, W for Wednesday. Children draw and paint. They make patterns and letters in the shaving foam and spend time mark making. They enjoy writing letters, putting them into envelopes and delivering them to the children in the room. The more-able children attempt to write their names on their paintings. Children use numbers in order. They count 13 children present, they say 'one, two, three' before blowing out candles on their pretend birthday cake and say they need one more cup at snack time. When finding animals in the sawdust they tell staff that they have 'found a pair'. Staff make good use of a projector to show items to the children which they identify from their shape. Children use a range of tools and techniques independently, for example, they make models from junk. They confidently operate simple equipment such as calculators and a computer. They join in well with their favourite songs and rhymes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop their self-esteem and confidence because the staff give them regular praise, for example, they say 'well done' for finding their name card, 'you did that very well' when pouring their drink, 'good girl' for knowing the colour red. The management liaises well with all parents to ensure that children's records contain sufficient information to enable appropriate care to be given, for example, the use of comforters and food arrangements. Children with additional needs are welcomed into the setting and given appropriate support to promote their welfare and development. They take part in a range of activities alongside their peers.

All children are helped to develop a positive attitude to others by using play equipment which reflects positive images of race and culture and by celebrating festivals. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of funded children is fostered. They play together cooperatively, share the play equipment and are well-mannered, for example, they say 'please' and 'thank you' at snack time and 'excuse me' to attract the attention of adults. They have planned opportunities to learn about themselves and the local community, for example, they go for walks along the village footpaths and see the farmers at work in the fields. Visitors come into the group to talk to the children about their work.

Children behave well as they learn to consider others and right from wrong. They benefit from staff adopting a consistent and positive approach to the management of their behaviour, for example, they remind children to walk when they are indoors.

Children's well-being is promoted by the positive relationships which have developed between staff and their parents. Children are collected from their rooms and there is a useful exchange of information, for example, how they have settled and what activities they have undertaken. Staff complete daily record sheets to keep parents informed of sleeping and nappy changing routines. Parents find the staff friendly and approachable and state they are very pleased with the care provided for their children. They receive the necessary information to enable them to make a complaint and understand the process for resolving it.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents receive sufficient basic details about the setting when they first join. They are given information regarding the early learning goals when their child starts in the pre-school room and gain ongoing knowledge from children's work and posters displayed in the rooms. They receive details of the themes planned for the term which enables them to carry on their child's learning at home. They feel well informed about their child's progress and look at their scrapbooks regularly. Some make written comments on the sheet at the back of the book.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the nursery promotes the welfare and development of all children and the operational plan shows how the space and resources are used to meet their needs. The nursery follows appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures to ensure that staff are suitable to provide care for children. There are satisfactory arrangements to make sure children are not left alone with anyone who has not been vetted. The staff team are well qualified and take part in regular supervision and annual appraisal sessions to identify their training and development needs. They undertake in-service training, for example, on health and safety issues. A rolling programme is followed for attendance of first aid and child protection courses.

Management and staff keep appropriate documentation which is mainly stored confidentially and ensure the safe running of the provision. An efficient registration system is used with registers completed accurately and kept up to date to ensure ratios are maintained and children are kept safe. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and are readily available to parents and staff.

The leadership and management is good. The setting is very committed to improvement of care and education for all children. The staff team are aware of their roles and responsibilities in developing children's learning. They meet together regularly to plan. Management does not have an effective system to evaluate the provision and identify areas for improvement to ensure all children achieve their full potential. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the nursery agreed to develop their risk assessments to cover outings, ensure nappy changing facilities provided children with privacy and provide a further range of natural materials and textures for the babies. The manager has successfully addressed all these issues. Outings are risk assessed to keep children safe, nappy-changing facilities are now appropriate to promote children's well-being and babies have many opportunities to explore natural play materials and a range of textures which encourage them to use their senses.

The areas for improvement identified at the last nursery education inspection were to provide further opportunities for children to engage in imaginative and role play, develop planning to include the next steps for individual children and increase staff's knowledge of the early learning goals. The setting has worked hard to develop their nursery education provision. The staff teaching the Foundation Stage have undertaken courses and are now more familiar with the relevant guidance documentation, enabling them to develop children's learning. The staff have introduced a suitable system to record children's individual progress towards the early learning goals. Children have sufficient opportunities to use their imagination and take part in role play activities to promote their creative development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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):

- improve the availability of fresh drinking water to children at all times
- obtain written parental permission to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment for the children.

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):

- introduce a system to evaluate all aspects of the provision to identify areas for improvement
- provide children with further opportunities to operate independently, initiate their own activities and develop planning to ensure the activities provide good challenge for the more-able children.

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