



North Star Nursery & Holiday Club

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109123
Inspection date	17 November 2006
Inspector	Nikki Whinton
Setting Address	Polaris House, Polaris Way, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1UH
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Registered person	North Star Nursery and Holiday Club Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are 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?

North Star Nursery and Holiday Club opened in 1999. It operates from a single story building with five rooms, toilets, kitchen and outdoor play area. The nursery and holiday club primarily serve the employees of the research councils. A maximum of 40 children may attend the nursery at any one time. A maximum of 16 children may attend the holiday club at any one time. The group opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 08.00 until 17.45.

There are currently 42 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The provision employs 13 members of staff. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications and four are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have twice-daily opportunities to play in the provision's fully enclosed garden. They are gaining proficiency in putting on their own coats and boots for outside play. Children move with pleasure, demonstrate good spatial awareness and have great fun splashing in puddles and washing muddy leaves. A large under cover area helps to ensure children still have the chance for fresh air and exercise during inclement weather. Children within the Foundation Stage room have planned opportunities to develop their physical skills whilst using a variety of equipment, such as a climbing frame, balls and ride-on vehicles, as well as by participating in regular music and movement sessions. They develop their fine motor control and coordination through the safe handling of a collection of tools such as knives, forks, pencils and the computer mouse.

Children develop their awareness of good hygiene issues through activities including brushing their teeth and washing their faces after meals. They understand why they need to wash their hands before eating, 'because you might get germs on your food'. They benefit from the good role modelling demonstrated by staff, their understanding of first aid and their awareness of the correct administrative procedures to follow if accidents occur or children require medication. Hygienic nappy changing routines are in place and children are protected from peers who are ill or infectious. Children's good health is actively promoted.

Children eat a nutritious, balanced hot lunchtime meal whilst in the setting. Their allergies and parental preferences are discussed prior to a child commencing in the setting. All discussions are carefully recorded. Staff have a clear understanding of each child's requirements and ensure they are accommodated. For example, a child who is not permitted any form of preservative is given fish as an alternative to stew. Babies are cradled when bottle-fed and their food is pureed to a consistency agreed with parents. Children eat healthy snacks in sufficient quantities to meet their needs and are able to help themselves freely to water. This helps to ensure they are drinking enough fluids to meet their differing requirements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play and rest within premises that are clean, well maintained, of a suitable temperature and welcoming to parents. Older children are able to visit the toilet independently, which helps them to develop their confidence and self-care skills. Sleeping babies and young children are regularly monitored. Safety is a high priority within the setting and there are a range of measures in place to support safety and help prevent accidents, both within the provision and when taking children on outings. For example, the premises are secure, the kitchen is inaccessible to children, stair gates restrict children's access to certain parts of the provision and socket covers are fitted to exposed electric points. Children learn to share responsibility for their safety

through practical activities, such as sweeping up sand after play or taking part in emergency evacuation drills.

Children play with a suitable range of clean, appropriately maintained equipment that is easily accessible to them for self-selection. They benefit from the manager's understanding of safety issues regarding the purchase of equipment and the staff's ongoing checks and cleaning of resources, to ensure they continue to be safe and suitable.

Children's welfare is supported by a staffing team that has a clear understanding of child protection issues, confidentiality of information and the correct procedures to follow if concerned about a child. There are effective arrangements for making parents fully aware of the provider's child protection responsibilities, prior to a child commencing in the setting. Children's well-being is actively promoted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter the nursery willingly, separate easily from their main carer and settle quickly to the activities on offer. Children are well occupied. For example, toddlers within the one to two year old room are fascinated by playing with a wide range of musical instruments or by investigating boxes containing shells, brightly coloured necklaces and pieces of cloth. Children in the two to three year old room have fun investigating oats and water. They learn to recognise their name in print and start to gain an awareness of basic sign language through music and rhymes. Older children are able to help themselves to additional equipment from labelled, low-level resource units, which helps them to build their confidence and independence. Children form positive relationships with their peers and the welcoming staff. They develop social skills as they learn to share resources, such as when playing with small world figures and to take turns, for example, when waiting to be given their lunch.

Younger children who have not yet started on the Foundation Stage curriculum, take part in planned child centred, age appropriate activities linked to the Birth to three matters framework. For example, babies experience the sensation of playing with jelly, whilst slightly older children have fun wearing role-play tabards and hats. Staff undertake regular written observations and three monthly assessments of the children, which they use to help support children's development.

Older children within the Foundation Stage demonstrate very good self-care skills and have frequent meaningful opportunities to develop their sense of responsibility. For example, they take turns to push the lunch trolley, lay the table for lunch or pour the snack time drinks. They willingly help with routine tasks including tidying away toys or hygienically disposing of tissues after use. However, staff do not always successfully manage some planned group activities, such as story time or the daily weatherboard discussion, where children are expected to sit and listen for a short period. As a result, some children quickly lose concentration and their interest in the activity.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The small, consistent staffing team have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are aware of the areas of development covered by activities. They know the children well and are aware of their differing stages of development. Staff plan a programme of age appropriate activities, which include all areas of the curriculum and undertake regular written observations of each child, linked to the six areas of learning. Information from observation is used to complete three monthly assessments of the children. However, information from assessment is not currently used to plan for individual children's future progress. As a result, children's learning potential is not always maximised.

Children are very articulate and show good self-esteem. They enjoy looking at photographs of themselves displayed around the room, one child saying to a member of staff, 'I'm so cute there'. They express their thoughts clearly, for example, when a child tells a friend, 'It's Anne's birthday and I'm going to her party after nursery'. Children quickly recognise their name in print during self-registration and are learning some examples of basic sign language as part of the daily routine. Children develop their early writing skills as they write their name on their daily 'choice sheet' and freely access a well-presented role-play area, selecting writing materials as they require them. Children count well and through activities such as placing numerals on a clock face, are learning to match and recognise numbers as labels. They use mathematical language confidently as part of their play, such as when discussing the number of play dough cakes they need to make for a proposed birthday party, 'I need to make four cakes, this one's a little smaller'. They have daily opportunities to calculate and to solve simple mathematical problems, including the number of cups needed at snack time.

Children learn the days of the week and begin to gain an awareness of changing seasons and weather patterns through planned daily discussion. Children thoroughly enjoy using information and communication technology to support their play and demonstrate skilled control of the mouse. They learn about the passage of time through activities including using a sand timer to decide when it is time for a peer to have their turn on the computer. They confidently discuss past, present or future events in their lives, whilst regularly using the correct tense. Children and their parents have the opportunity to take two soft toys called Trevor and Trudi with them on their holidays. They are encouraged to send postcards to the setting and share photographs on their return, of the toys experiences with the children. They welcome meaningful visitors to the setting, such as a father with his motorbike, the neighbourhood police officer and the local librarian. In addition, they are involved in a range of outings, such as to the park or shops, which help them to learn more about their local environment. Children regularly take part in child centred creative activities and experiment using a range of materials including dough, paint and clay. Children use tools and materials imaginatively in their play, for example, one child tells a friend, 'I'm making a leaf cutter', when building with mecano, whilst another is totally absorbed cutting out pastry cases using play dough 'There's nine people at the party'. Children sing a repertoire of action songs and rhymes from memory and have the chance to experiment with a variety of musical instruments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff know the children and their differing needs very well. For example, they have a clear understanding of babies' individual sleep or settling procedures and make sure dietary requirements are met. All children are valued and respected as individuals. Support offered to children attending with English as an additional language or additional needs is appropriate to ensure they are fully integrated into the provision and have the chance to develop and learn. Children play with a suitable range of resources, including books, puzzles, small world figures, musical instruments and games, to help them increase their awareness of diversity.

Generally, children behave very well, as appropriate for their age and stage of development. Staff talk to the children appropriately and use positive strategies such as distraction, praise and encouragement to promote good behaviour. Children learn to relate positively to their peers and adults.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are confident, independent and demonstrate good self-care skills. For example, they enjoy taking turns to be the daily monitor and thoroughly enjoy placing articles in the correct receptacles for recycling. They enthusiastically share news about their home lives. For example, whilst discussing the failure of the pre-school room clock a child announces, 'sometimes my baby runs out of battery, my daddy says that'. They are aware of the need for rules and know they must find and match specific coinage from a box to 'pay' for their snack time milk. Through art and craft activities, such as during a topic on Divali, children have some opportunities to develop their awareness of differing cultures and beliefs.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given good quality information about the setting prior to their child starting in the nursery. They have the chance to join the setting's parent user group and are invited to complete questionnaires about the quality of the provision. They are actively encouraged to become involved in their child's learning, at home through the 'activities at home' sheets, by attending nursery events including monthly sing along or play sessions and by sharing their skills. For example, one parent has visited to teach children key Spanish words and to tell them about the Festival of the Three Kings. Frequent newsletters, the setting's intranet site and parents' notice boards keep parents up to date with planning for each of the base rooms and general information about the setting. Daily sheets are completed for all children and there are regular informal opportunities for discussion about children's progress and achievements. Parents have access to children's three monthly assessment records and are encouraged to share with staff what they know about their child. However, parents are given limited information about Ofsted or its role, should they wish to make a complaint.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care, learning and development is supported by enthusiastic, caring staff who work extremely well together as a team. They are appropriately qualified and regularly undertake a wide range of early years training courses to increase their knowledge and support their

professional development. However, limited staff availability at the start of the day prevents any flexibility in the routine and as a result, children's individual needs may not always be fully met. There are thorough systems for recording the daily attendance of children, staff and visitors, which has a positive impact on promoting children's welfare. All legally required documentation is maintained, securely stored and easily accessible to support children's well-being, such as in an emergency.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The management team is well qualified and experienced in their roles. There are regularly staff and planning meetings to ensure good communication links are maintained throughout the provision. The manager monitors the planning and assessments completed by staff throughout the nursery. However, the management of some large group Foundation Stage activities is not always successful. The group has a good understanding of its strengths and is aware of most areas for development. Strategies, such as targeted training are being arranged to help support improvement. In addition, the setting benefits from regular visits from a Swindon early years advisory teacher. The nursery has formed links with a local primary school. The reception class teacher visits the setting, whilst Foundation Stage children attend the school Christmas production and have the chance to experience the size and layout of a typical primary school provision. This helps to support children in their transition into school.

Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

As a result of the last combined care and education inspection, the group was given a non-regulatory action, recommendations and key issues for action, to help develop the provision.

The care report required the group ensure there are effective systems to supervise students who are not vetted. In addition, the setting was requested to record the arrival and departure times of staff and visitors and extend the range of resources reflecting positive images of culture, race, gender and disability. The group was also asked to extend the statement of child protection arrangements, to include the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff, how the setting will manage confidentiality and details of the named person for child protection.

The education report recommended the provision of opportunities for children to learn about health and bodily awareness through the daily routine and to consider the length of time children spend participating in large group activities, to ensure they do not lose interest or concentration. In addition, the group was asked to improve planning for mathematics, to ensure children have regular opportunities to develop their addition, subtraction and problem solving skills.

There are now appropriate measures to protect children from unvetted adults, the attendance of staff and visitors is recorded and there are an appropriate range of resources available reflecting positive images of diversity. Suitable child protection policies and procedures are in place. Children have opportunities as part of the daily routine to develop their calculation and problem solving skills as well as the chance to increase their understanding of health issues.

These improvements have had a positive impact on the quality of care offered to the children. However, children are not always fully engaged and quickly lose concentration, when participating in some planned whole group activities.

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 the complaints procedure includes information about the role of Ofsted and full contact details
- ensure sufficient staff are available within the provision at the beginning of the day to ensure that children's individual needs are met

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 assessment programme to ensure that information from assessment is used to plan activities to promote individual children's progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals
- review the management of planned group activities to ensure that children are able to concentrate and maintain their interest.

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