



## Squirrels @ Ludwick Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY276945
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 November 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Gail Groves
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<b>Registered person</b>	Squirrels Day Care at Ludwick Nursery School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

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

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

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

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

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

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

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

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Squirrels at Ludwick opened in January 2004. It operates from four large rooms in a purpose built building on a shared site with Ludwick Nursery School which is situated in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 80 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each week day from 08:00 to 18:00 for 48 weeks of the year. All children share access to the secure enclosed outside play area. The nursery has close links with Ludwick Nursery School and the local community where they also provide a drop in centre for parents and children called 'Positive Beginnings'. This focuses on health and parenting issues for families with young children.

There are currently 135 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these 15 children receive funding for nursery education. The baby unit is part of the Neighbourhood Nursery scheme which gives babies from the local area priority. Older children also come from

the local catchment area. The nursery supports children with learning disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 24 staff of whom 16, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Four staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery has input from a qualified teacher and are members of the Pre School Learning Alliance. The nursery has obtained the Hertfordshire Quality Standards award.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, good hygiene routines for changing nappies and for serving snacks prevent the spread of infection. The majority of staff hold current first aid certificates and are therefore able to deal appropriately with children who are injured or become unwell. Children learn to understand simple, good health and hygiene practices so that they are developing good hygiene habits for later life. They wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and are supported in learning to wipe their nose with a tissue.

Children are well nourished because they enjoy a well planned, balanced diet containing a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables. Meals are freshly prepared on site and menus have been revised to ensure that they do not contain processed foods, such as sausages or burgers. Children are encouraged to eat and enjoy snacks, such as carrot sticks, fruit and bread and butter and discuss with staff that these are good for them and make their muscles strong. A new routine which encourages children to clean their teeth after meals is currently being set up in order to further develop their understanding about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Children's health and dietary needs are discussed before children begin to attend and the setting works well with parents to ensure that these are met. Specific training for administering medication for life threatening medical conditions is sought and strategies are in place to ensure that children's particular medical and dietary needs are clearly understood by all staff.

Children take part in regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors and are developing good motor skills and coordination. Babies learn to sit, crawl and walk as they explore the exciting array of toys and resources in the 'Small Explorers' room and are encouraged and supported to do so by staff who are sensitive to their needs. Older children play with cars, sit and ride toys and appropriate climbing equipment in their designated outside play area and throw, catch and kick balls or roll hoops as they develop their large muscle skills. The oldest children share a large, stimulating outside play area with Ludwick Nursery School. Challenging climbing and balancing apparatus and a wide variety of bikes and wheeled toys help them to extend their physical skills and they are able to play ball games, develop their own assault courses with large wooden blocks and planks or dig and build in the large sand pit. An area of shrubbery with winding paths over mounds of earth and a cycle track with inclines and turns helps children to expend energy and strengthens their muscles as they run and pedal. Covered areas close to the building enable children to be outside and to benefit from fresh air even

when the weather is poor. Children also have access to two large rooms where they have the space to use large apparatus inside or to take part in music and movement sessions to develop physical skills.

Children rest and sleep according to their needs so that they do not become overtired. Babies sleep routines are carefully met and ensure that they have continuity and feel secure. Older children who need to sleep after lunch do so on sleep mats in a quiet room whilst the other children enjoy a period of free play so that they can play quietly or be energetic as they wish.

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

The provision is good.

Children use good quality suitable and safe equipment which meets their differing needs. Resources are stored at low level so that children can access them safely and independently and broken items are repaired or replaced. Appropriate procedures help to keep children safe when they go on outings, such as to post a letter in the local post box or to collect leaves in the school grounds as part of a planned topic. A ratio of one adult to two children ensures that they can be fully supervised and staff take a mobile telephone so that they can summon help in an emergency. Children are also safeguarded because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practise when necessary. The designated person for child protection has all of the necessary contact details readily to hand should she need to report any concerns regarding a child's welfare. Staff are clear that they have a duty to record any issues that may arise and to report these to her.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, generally secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment where many of the risks to their safety have been assessed and minimised. For example, doors are fitted with finger guards and low level glass so that children cannot shut their fingers in the hinges and people entering the room can see children sitting on the floor and do not knock them over. Floor areas are kept clear so that babies learning to stand and walk can do so without hindrance, spilt water is mopped up promptly to minimise slipping and outside play areas are securely fenced. The setting has also used the Ofsted publication 'Early Years: Safe and Sound' as a basis to look at and assess the safety measures they have in place. However, although the front door has an entry buzzer and cannot be opened from the outside, parents leaving the building sometimes allow unknown people entry. As a result, children's safety is potentially compromised. Regular emergency evacuation drills are held and records are kept which show the date and time that these occurred. However, no formal analysis of how well the procedure worked or of any difficulties which may have been experienced is recorded. Consequently, any required changes to the procedure to improve children's safety still further may potentially not be fully identified.

Children learn to keep themselves safe through planned topic work and discussions with staff about practical instances as they occur within their daily routine. For example, staff are vigilant about possible dangers and remind children to sit on their chairs properly so that they do not fall and ask them to walk rather than run along the assault course they have made so that they do not bump into each other. Topics such as road safety, visits from a fire fighter and regularly practising the emergency evacuation drill also raise the children's awareness of safety.

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

The provision is good.

Children arrive happy and eager to participate and quickly become involved in a broad range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and learning. For example, babies enjoy feeling different textures, such as mashed potato or paint and making sounds with musical instruments as they begin to explore the world about them. They learn to sit, crawl, stand and walk with the encouragement and support of staff in an environment in which they are allowed sufficient freedom to test their physical limits safely. Children show a positive approach to new experiences. They confidently make decisions, explore and investigate and as a result they are able to extend their learning. For example, they are eager to explore how a laptop computer works. They look closely at how the lid opens and closes and try to discover if the picture disappears as the lid goes down. Affectionate relationships are carefully fostered between staff and children and as a result they are confident and happy and are developing good social and communication skills. Staff make good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan activities and are also beginning to use it to assess children's progress.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are developing good social skills as they learn to work well together. For example, deciding how to build a construction together or negotiating whose turn it is to use the bike. They are encouraged to be independent in their self-care skills and put on and take off their coats with little support, use the toilet independently and wipe their hands and faces after lunch. Staff interact with children at all times, helping them to develop their language skills and vocabulary by asking questions which require them to think carefully and to make connections in their learning. For example, remembering a favourite story and predicting what will happen on the next page. Children use marks readily to represent their ideas and do so on a large scale when they draw with chalks on the floor in the outside play area. They develop and improve hand-eye coordination skills as they use scissors, paintbrushes and glue spreaders and good adult support in a wide range of outdoor activities helps children improve their climbing and balancing skills.

Children enjoy singing number rhymes and use their fingers to represent numbers by adding or taking them away as they sing. They look at differences in shape and size as they make pictures and collages with pieces of different shaped paper and talk about the shape of everyday items. Planned topics and themes allow children to explore and investigate their environment. For example, they grow tomatoes, look at pine cones and go for walks to collect fallen leaves. Outside they build large scale constructions with plastic bricks, wooden blocks and planks. They use a variety of different tools, such as spades, rakes and trowels in the sand pit where they investigate what the sand will do as they dig, mould, pat and smooth it. Well organised daily routines, such as tidying up and snack time, increase children's awareness of time. Children use their imaginations as they sing and take part in action songs, develop role play stories in the outside play house and use the dressing up resources to pretend to be someone else. They develop their language and creative abilities as they look at and experiment with colours during painting activities, discuss the texture of string as they glue a collage and describe what they are drawing as they use pencils and chalks to draw people.

Staff have a generally secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn. This enables them to plan a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities that reflect most aspects of the six areas of learning. Activities initiated by staff are well balanced with activities initiated by children and are adapted to ensure that all children have access to the activity in appropriate ways. Staff provide good role models through the care and concern they show the children and have realistically high expectations of them. There is a clear and detailed system for curriculum planning which shows the links to the areas of learning and the early learning goals. However, some plans are not always sufficiently or correctly completed. For example, some weekly plans do not show the links to the stepping stones or early learning goals and some daily activity plans are missing. As a result, the teaching and learning intentions of some activities are potentially unfocused and some of the stepping stones of children's learning may be missed. Staff keep some assessments records of what each child knows or can do in order to guide planning and teaching but these do not clearly link to the stepping stones or early learning goals. As a result, children's achievements and progression within the Foundation Stage cannot be fully monitored. A new assessment system has been recently devised but is not yet in place.

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

The provision is good.

Children are valued and included and feel a strong sense of belonging. As a result, they are happy and settled and take part fully in all the play and learning opportunities available to them. They are encouraged to make choices and take decisions throughout their daily routine and are therefore developing confidence and self-esteem. For example, they choose which resources and activities they wish to take part in, choose whether to play inside or outside and decide which snack to eat and which flavour milk shake to drink. Children are aware of their own needs and are learning to respect the needs of others because they are encouraged to share and take turns. When staff suggest that it is time for someone else to have a turn with a particular toy they swap without complaint and some of the older children are able to negotiate taking turns with each other with little or no adult support. Children are developing good social skills. For example, having decided to make an assault course with the large wooden bricks and planks kept in the outside play area, children work closely together to design and build it. They then queue to take their turn to walk, balance and run carefully around it. Children learn to respond to appropriate expectations for their behaviour. Staff value politeness and talk to children about the importance of using words rather than physical means to express displeasure. For example, when a child waves a puppet in the face of another child, she tells him that she does not like it and he immediately stops. Children benefit from some activities and resources which help them value diversity and develop positive attitudes to the differences between people. For example, they learn about Diwali, Hanukah and Chinese New Year and have access to resources, such as books, posters and dolls, which reflect the diversity within society. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff ensure that parents are kept well informed about their children's achievements and progress through informal discussions at the beginning or end of the day. In addition, babies have a daily diary book to report detailed information regarding their activities, feeds and sleep times. Parents are also invited to come in and discuss

their children's written records of progress whenever they wish. Transitions between groups as children get older are handled carefully and supportively and a small booklet is provided for parents when children move onto the 'Creators' room with information about the outside play area and the more challenging activities provided in it. A comprehensive and detailed prospectus, which includes shortened versions of the policies and procedures, ensures that new parents are provided with good quality information about the setting before their child starts to attend. Regular newsletters and a parents' notice board help to ensure that parents are updated with any new information. However, parents are not helped to understand how the activities provided by the setting help children learn and progress through the Foundation Stage. Consequently, they are unable to fully support and continue children's play and learning at home.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Effective use of time, space and staff deployment contributes to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. For example, rooms are organised to maximise the play and learning opportunities for children. Babies have access to carpeted areas where they can crawl and explore and older children have designated areas for different kinds of play, such as sand and water, home corner play and construction. All resources are stored at low level to encourage children's independence and boxes and drawers are clearly labelled with pictures and words. The large outside play area is exciting and stimulating and is adaptable for use in all weathers, with canopied areas near the building for use in poor weather and covered areas further away to provide protection when it is sunny and hot. Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children and use their time effectively to ensure that they are always available to support children's care learning and play and that adult to child ratios are maintained correctly. All of the necessary documentation for the efficient and safe running of the provision is in place and the setting's policies and procedures generally work well in practice to promote positive outcomes for children.

Leadership and management is good. The manager has a strong focus on constantly improving the provision of care and education for children. For example, the group has taken part in and gained accreditation in the Herts Quality Standards quality assurance scheme, there are plans in place to improve the outside play area and a detailed self evaluation of how the setting meets the outcomes for children has been drawn up and is updated regularly. Recently a system for observing staff working with children has been set up in order that weaknesses and strengths can be identified and staff can receive regular feedback on their practice. These observations also provide evidence for staff appraisals and inform the planning of future training needs. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and contribute to children being protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development.

Overall, children's needs are met.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the setting agreed to ensure that parental signatures are obtained for each medication consent and for each entry in the accident book. Parents are now always asked to sign every entry in the accident book which relates to their child so that they are aware of

any injuries and can continue to monitor their child's well-being at home. They are also required to sign all written consents they give for staff to administer medication to their child and must provide clear written instructions as to the type, the amount and the time each dose of medication is to be given. As a result, children's health and safety is more fully protected.

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

Since the last inspection Ofsted have received one complaint relating to Standard 1 (Suitable Person), Standard 2 (Organisation), Standard 11 (Behaviour Management), Standard 12 (Partnership with parents and carers), Standard 13 (Child Protection) and Standard 14 (Documentation). The complaint related to a failure to deal appropriately with bullying or challenging behaviour, a lack of security, a failure to respond adequately to parental complaints, the absence of the manager or deputy manager, inadequate accident records, a failure to keep appropriate records and failure to notify Ofsted of significant events.

A childcare inspector conducted an unannounced visit to the provision on 4 September 2006. As a result of this visit the provider was set five actions in order to meet the national Standards. These were to improve the system for managing access to the nursery, to ensure that the behaviour management policy included reference to bullying, to ensure that the complaints policy was updated in line with current legislative changes, to ensure that all staff are aware of the need to maintain privacy and confidentiality and to notify Ofsted of any significant changes to the nursery's operational plan.

The provider has now put up notices on the door and sent a letter to all parents asking them not to allow unknown persons access into the building. They have reviewed the behaviour management and complaints policies to include the relevant details and have discussed issues of privacy and confidentiality with staff at a staff meeting. They have also now informed Ofsted of staff changes.

The provider remains qualified for registration. The provider has made a record of the complaint in their complaint record.

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):

- review security systems to prevent unauthorised access to the building
- ensure records of emergency evacuation practises are consistently and fully recorded.

### **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):

- ensure that plans are always completed and show clear links to the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage
- develop assessment procedures to monitor children's progress through the Foundation Stage and use these to influence the planning for children's future learning
- improve the information given to parents regarding the Foundation Stage and how the activities provided by the nursery help children make progress towards the early learning goals.

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