



Little Gems 111

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	122423
Inspection date	22 November 2006
Inspector	Jane Elizabeth Chappell
Setting Address	United Reformed Church, Harestone Hill, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 6SX
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Registered person	Hilary Gilbert
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Gems III Pre-school is situated in Caterham, Surrey. It opened in 2000 and operates from a church hall. Children have the use of a large hall, and a smaller side room. The children who attend are from the local and surrounding areas. A maximum of 32 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, from 09.15 to 12.00 during term time only. A lunch club operates on a Monday and Thursday until 12.45.

There are currently 49 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs nine members of staff. Of these three hold appropriate early years, qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm and spacious environment, where they learn the importance of good personal care. They have a clear understanding of why they must wash their hands before they eat, and after using the toilet. Children are mostly protected from risks of cross-infection because adequate systems are in place to maintain good hygiene. However, staff do not consistently clean the changing mat after each child, this practise does not help to minimise the risk of cross infection. Children's health is protected as staff have first aid training, in the event of anyone requiring first aid treatment. Documentation for the recording of accidents and medicines is in place and set out clearly.

Children enjoy healthy snacks including various fruits. Staff ensure food is properly prepared and complies with dietary and religious requirements. Children are beginning to understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Topics and activities are planned to teach the children about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, for example, 'How my body works'. However, drinking water is not available throughout the session, limiting the children's opportunity to drink when they feel thirsty.

Children enjoy a suitable range of activities, which contribute to their good health. A good supply of equipment in the small hall helps children to begin to develop their large motor skills and control of their bodies. Children learn to balance, climb confidently on the climbing frame and peddle bikes, manoeuvring them skilfully around the room. Children use an interesting range of tools and materials that help them develop co-ordination. Their fine motor skills are developed well, through activities such as tipping and pouring with the split peas, cutting and moulding the play dough.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from playing in a spacious well-organised environment where they can play freely and independently. However, provision has not been made for children who wish to relax or play quietly. Children have access to good quality, suitable and well-maintained equipment that is regularly checked. The possibilities of accidental injury are identified and minimised through on-going risk assessments. This means they are able to move around safely and independently.

The staff are appropriately deployed ensuring children are always well supervised by staff who understand how to achieve a balance between freedom and the setting of safe limits. Regular fire drills are carried out, which enable children to become familiar with the procedures and evacuate the building safely.

Staff are aware of child protection policies and understand the procedures to follow if they have any concerns, this supports children's welfare. The setting's current child protection policy is out of date; it is not in line with latest guidance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children attending the pre-school are generally confident within the setting and have built secure relationships with the staff. They arrive happily and quickly settle at an activity. Children are familiar with the regular daily routine and enjoy making choices about their experiences and selecting their own materials. Equipment is set out at low levels, which enables children to self-select their choice of activity and allows them to explore and investigate. Young children delight in investigating with the 'Discovery Box', laughing and smiling at each other as they look through the binoculars. They enjoy playing with the magnets and are interested when they 'stick' together. They enjoy the company of the older children during the circle time at the end of the session and sing, smile and chat with them. Being together with other children helps them to become sociable and confident in communicating.

Staff are developing an understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and are implementing it into their planning. They use observations of children's development to plan for their individual needs and endeavour to evaluate these activities to ensure that play opportunities are appropriate.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the expectations for children's learning. They provide a suitable variety of activities and experiences for children, helping them to make steady progress in most areas of learning. Staff make regular observations of the children and record their achievements in their records. This enables them to identify the next steps for each child and ensure these are focussed on during individual and group activities for each child.

Children speak readily to peers and adults. They willingly talk about their friends and families. Most children express themselves clearly. Children learn to be independent and to take care of their own needs when they visit the toilet or wash their hands for snack time. Some children are beginning to form letters when they write and some can recognise the letters in their names, although they do not regularly write for different purposes, for example within the role play area. Most children enjoy looking at books and they turn the pages carefully. They mostly listen and respond appropriately at story time.

Children have sound recognition of numbers below 10. They choose number activities during free play and enjoy number rhymes and songs. Children are using their calculation skills to solve practical problems as they play. For example, when children are playing with the dough they separate it into two piles, comparing whose is bigger/smaller, then adding more to their pile and comparing again using simple mathematical language i.e., more than, less than.

Children investigate using their senses. They discuss similarities and differences using natural objects, such as comparing natural resources from the garden at autumn time. There are ample opportunities for children to investigate with items from the 'discovery box' for example looking through the binoculars, moving objects with the magnets, and touching and feeling a variety of natural items, such as shells, and baskets. There are adequate opportunities to use programmable toys and equipment to aid their learning and to question why and how things work. Children are beginning to understand past and present, they discuss people, places and events in their own lives. Children learn about different cultures and beliefs through well-planned topic work.

There are some opportunities for children to use their creativity. Children enjoy art and craft activities, such as drawing and painting. Children are involved in music and movement sessions that encourage them to sing and move to the music. However, there is limited further provision for children to extend upon their play within the creative and role-play area, this limits children opportunities to express their imagination and recreate familiar scenarios.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have access to a suitable range of resources that positively promote ethnicity and culture. For example, a suitable selection of books, play food and dressing up clothes. However, there are limited resources available to positively promote disabilities. Children are given equality of access to all play and learning resources regardless of gender. Children learn about cultures that may be different from their own through activities based on a variety of celebrations.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported within the pre-school by a knowledgeable staff team. The staff work closely in partnership with parents and other professionals to meet the individual needs of the children. There are good individual educational plans in place that ensure consistency of care and help the children to reach their full potential. Staff have a calm and consistent approach to managing children's behaviour. Overall, this results in a calm atmosphere, which helps children to behave well. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents is good. Children are cared for by staff who work closely with parents to meet their needs. Parents receive good information about the Foundation Stage. The information outlines what and how children will learn, this ensures parents understand that play has an important role in developing children's skills for the next stage of learning. Staff involve parents in their child's learning through regular newsletters, and the parents' notice board has information of the activities that are taking place. Parents state that they are more than happy with the service that is provided but would like more opportunities to share their children's progress on a formal basis.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Space, staff and resources are suitably organised to create a stimulating and accessible environment, where children are busy and occupied throughout the session. Children are cared for by staff that have been appropriately vetted, due to effective recruitment procedures. The team work well together and are aware of their individual responsibilities. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of child development, and appropriate staff ratios are maintained, ensuring children are well supervised.

Most mandatory records are in place to ensure the safe and effective management of the setting in order to promote children's welfare. However, staff registers do not include times of arrival and departure, parental permission has not always been sought, and the child protection and complaints policies require updating.

Leadership and management of the care and nursery education is satisfactory. The registered provider promotes a clear ethos for the pre-school and demonstrates a sound understanding of their strengths and areas that need improvement, such as systems in place for staff to complete self-evaluations, along with management to identify their strengths and weakness. These are then used to consider professional development; staff are actively encouraged to attend training. This raises staff morale, as they are receptive and motivated to the management systems in place. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the nursery was asked to make improvements in the following areas: Develop staff knowledge and understanding of child protection, and add relevant contact details, devise a policy for the administering of medication, ensure that parents sign and date the accident book, ensure that staff have sufficient information about child's development and progress to enable them to plan activities that meet the needs of the children.

There are now comprehensive procedures in place, which ensure parents sign for any accidents that happen at the pre-school. Measures are now in place to support and inform staff about each child's development and progress to enable them to plan activities that meet the needs of the children. The registered provider has provided training for the staff to develop their understanding of child protection, however, the policy needs updating in line with recent legislation. A further recommendation has been made for this policy to be updated. Overall, these improvements have had a positive impact on the health, safety and well-being of the children whom attend the setting.

At the last inspection for nursery education, the setting was asked to make improvements to the staff's involvement in planning, the system of reviewing staff, the organisation of staff so that there is continuity of key persons who are responsible for ensuring individuals educational needs are met. To improve the role-play areas so children have a direction and are able to create scenarios that are connected to themes and consolidate learning.

Good progress has been made in most of these areas. Staff are now very much involved in planning. The registered provider has put procedures into place to review staff, all staff now complete a self-evaluation form and this is used to identify strengths and areas where training would be beneficial. There are key staff that plan and carry out focused activities with key children ensuring that their individual educational needs are met. The registered provider has developed the role-play area however; a further recommendation has been set to further improve this area. Overall, these improvements have had a positive impact on the level of the children's learning and progress made whilst they attend the setting.

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.

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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 that provision is made for children who wish to relax or play quietly, equipped with appropriate furniture
- update the complaints procedure to include current contact details and review the setting's child protection procedure to ensure that it is in line with Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) guidance
- ensure that all registers have arrival and departure times on them and that permission is sought from parents to seek emergency medical advice and treatment for all children
- ensure drinking water is available to children at all times.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop the creative activities and role play areas to provide regular opportunities for children to freely express their thoughts, ideas and feelings (for child care too)
- ensure that children have the opportunity to mark make for a meaning and within a variety of situations within the setting

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