



Little Otters Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	105992
Inspection date	14 February 2007
Inspector	Anne Legge
Setting Address	East Budleigh Village Hall, Wynards Road, East Budleigh, Budleigh Salterton, Devon, EX9 7DU
Telephone number	01395 445825 CP 01395 445809
E-mail	
Registered person	Little Otters Pre School
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 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?

Little Otters Pre-school has been registered since 1994. It is located in the village hall of East Budleigh in East Devon. The pre-school is registered to care for 26 children, aged from three to five years. There are currently 19 children on the register, including 16 funded three- and four-year-olds. The group welcomes and supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Little Otters is managed by a voluntary committee and six staff are employed to work with the children, four of whom have appropriate early years qualifications. The group has use of a large hall, entrance lobby, toilets and a separate kitchen. There is an enclosed outdoor play area, with an all-weather surface. The pre-school is open during term time from 09:30 to 12:00 every weekday, and there is a lunch club on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, from 12:00 to 13:00. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy very good opportunities to be physically active and to access fresh air. They play outdoors, in their new enclosed area, using wheeled toys and a trampoline or practising their throwing and catching skills. They go for walks in the woods or to local facilities, and they use a large indoor climbing frame, to climb, balance or slide. They also enjoy moving to music. Children benefit from eating healthy snacks and meals. They eat a very good variety of fruits, as well as breadsticks or toast, for their snack. Packed lunches are well-balanced, as staff encourage parents to provide nutritious meals and the pre-school sometimes offers healthy lunches, to model good practice. Children have an adequate quantity of fluids, as fresh drinking water is available and they are offered milk or water at snack-time. Their special dietary needs are known and carefully met, especially when cooking activities are planned.

Children are mainly well protected from infection. The premises are spotless and staff clean tables before children eat from them. Children learn good hygiene routines, as staff remind them to wash their hands before they eat and after using the toilet. However, they share a bowl of soapy water to wash off paint and glue in the craft area, and this is sometimes also used for washing hands before snack, leaving children vulnerable to the spread of infection. There is an effective sickness exclusion policy, which helps to protect children. Their care is very consistent, when they are unwell or injured. Records of accidents and medication are comprehensive and shared appropriately with parents. There are very good systems for sharing information about accidents with parents who do not always collect their children from the group. Almost all staff have appropriate first aid qualifications.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in exceptionally safe and secure premises. They use a spacious hall, where they can move around safely, enjoying a good variety of activities. Their security is assured, due to excellent systems for locking and monitoring doors and the outdoor area, which is fully enclosed. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of all safety issues and regularly risk assess all areas of the building, addressing any hazards immediately. For example, they use socket covers, door restrictors and firmly closed doors, to protect children. They check toilets, cupboards and floors before children arrive, to ensure that risks are minimised. Children choose from a very good range of toys and resources, which are clean and in good condition. There are very effective systems for regularly checking all play materials, to reduce any risk of harm to children. Each staff member takes responsibility for particular sets of equipment and ensures that they are maintained in excellent condition.

Children are very safe in emergencies, as there are excellent systems for ensuring that they all know evacuation routines. Fire drills are held each half term, and staff practise evacuation procedures throughout the week, so that all children become familiar with them. Children are exceptionally safe on outings, as staff thoroughly risk assess each trip and carefully manage all identified risks. Data from accident records is regularly scrutinised, and action is taken to

improve safety, where necessary. Children learn to be aware of hazards, as they discuss road safety, while playing with toy cars and roads, or the safe use of the climbing frame. They are very well protected from abuse or neglect, as staff have undertaken relevant training and have a clear understanding of all issues and procedures relating to safeguarding children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy well-organised sessions, when they are able to access a very good variety of activities, which effectively promote their development. They move freely between resources, making independent choices and concentrating very well at their chosen tasks. They also take part in whole-group and adult-led activities, when they contribute enthusiastically and make good progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan exciting topics and activities, ensuring that they cover the whole curriculum over time. Themes are very effectively developed, to help children make links between different areas of learning and to deepen their understanding. For example, in a topic based around the 'Gruffalo' story, children develop their love of books, as they become involved in the plot and explore rhymes. They take part in imaginative role play, involving hunting for animals in a cave, and they make models and collages, using excellent materials, to develop their creativity. They go for a woodland walk, where they collect and explore natural materials, using torches and magnifiers, to extend their understanding of technology. They count and compare leaves in a large tray, developing their knowledge of numbers and patterns. Children are encouraged to talk about their experiences, consolidating their learning and enhancing their confidence and communication skills.

Staff observe children's achievements and use this information informally, but effectively, to plan for the next steps in learning. They use questions and discussion very skilfully, to develop children's understanding and skills. For example, they invite children to listen and look carefully when out walking, asking them about the things they see and hear. They extend counting into calculation for able children, as when comparing numbers of children and chairs, at snack-time. Children are consistently challenged to recognise and write their names on their work, and to extend their understanding of letter sounds, as they discuss the letter of the week, or letters in their name. They are helped to develop a sense of time, as staff explain the daily routine and activities, using a time line and pictures very effectively. Children make very good progress in their physical development, as they have regular opportunities to use large equipment, such as wheeled toys and a climbing frame, developing very good control. They use scissors, cutters, pens and glue spreaders with increasing co-ordination. They enjoy singing familiar songs, such as their welcoming song, and using musical instruments to explore rhythm and sounds.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and included, and their individual needs are carefully addressed. Staff know them very well and plan for their particular interests and abilities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They learn to value differences, as they use good resources, such as multi-cultural dressing-up clothes, or celebrate a variety of festivals, such as Chinese New Year. Children behave very well, due to the excellent approach of staff, to the management of their behaviour. They understand the pre-school's clear routines and respond to the staff's calm, consistent and positive strategies. They enjoy copious praise for their efforts and they willingly comply with the high expectations of the group. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are very well included and supported. Staff are committed to meeting their needs and there are very effective systems to monitor their progress and support their development.

Children enjoy very consistent care, due to the pre-school's good systems for communicating with their parents. The welcome pack and regular newsletters include detailed information, and parents are regularly consulted about all aspects of their child's care. Carers are invited to become involved in the work of the pre-school, by serving on the committee or helping on the parent rota. Partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff provide termly reports for each child, detailing their progress in each area of learning. Good information is given regularly, about topics and letters of the week. Parents can access their child's records and discuss them with key workers, whenever they choose. However, current systems do not include detailed tracking of children's progress towards the early learning goals, nor targets for future development. This sometimes reduces the ability of parents to support and comment on children's success in achieving the next steps in their learning. Following feedback from parents, new systems are currently being developed, which include helpful information about children's targets for learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the very good organisation of the pre-school. Staff and the committee work very effectively together, implementing their ethos of constantly improving the quality of provision for children. Staff are well-qualified and committed to regularly updating their skills, by attending relevant training. They work as an effective team and children enjoy excellent individual attention, due to the pre-school's very good adult ratios. Children play in an exceptionally safe environment, which is clean and attractive, with displays and resources used thoughtfully, to enhance the shared premises. The ample space is used effectively, to provide a very good range of activities for children. Standards of health and hygiene are mainly good. Children's care is supported by almost comprehensive documentation, although the complaints procedures contain some out-of-date details. Records are shared appropriately with parents.

Leadership and management are good. The current committee has implemented excellent systems for monitoring the quality of the nursery education. Regular meetings are held with staff, including one-to-one discussions and detailed evaluations of current practice. Areas for development have been accurately identified and measures are being introduced, to improve

assessment systems and the sharing of information with parents. The pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the pre-school has developed good systems for regularly reviewing and updating the policies and procedures which support children's care, and almost all documentation is now current and appropriate. They have improved children's safety, by undertaking training, to update their knowledge of child protection issues and procedures, so that children are better protected.

Planning systems have been updated, and now ensure that children access all areas of learning appropriately. Assessment systems are also being constantly improved. Staff know what children have achieved and what they need to learn next, and they are effective in challenging children appropriately. Parents are now better able to support their child's development, as they receive regular progress reports and are offered opportunities to talk to their child's key worker. However, comprehensive systems for recording children's progress towards the early learning goals are still being developed, and the pre-school is only just beginning to implement formal systems for sharing future targets with carers, so that they can fully support children in achieving them.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 there have been no complaints 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 children's health, by ensuring that they always use clean, warm water to wash their hands before they eat

- make sure that children's care is always underpinned by current documentation, including up-to-date complaints procedures.

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):

- continue to develop systems for recording children's progress towards the early learning goals and share this information regularly with parents, so that they are able to fully support their child, in working towards the next steps in learning.

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