

Elm Cottage Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	307135
Inspection date	13 April 2007
Inspector	Jeanne Lesley Walsh
Setting Address	11 Crescent Park, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 2HS
Telephone number	0161 443 2228
E-mail	
Registered person	Yvonne Margaret Thomas
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?

Elm Cottage Day Nursery is one of six provisions run by Elm Cottage Group Day Care. It opened in 1989 and operates from a large detached property situated on Crescent Park in Stockport. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. It is registered to care for a maximum of 50 children, aged under five years, at any one time. There are currently 97 children on roll, of these 34 receive funding for nursery education.

Children have access to playrooms on the ground floor and the first floor of the property. There is a rear garden available for outdoor play, which includes a soft play area. The nursery serves the local community and parents and carers who commute into Stockport. The setting supports

children with disability and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 18 staff who work directly with the children, of these 15 staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from an early years advisor.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a well maintained setting, where they are learning the importance of good personal care. They are encouraged to wash their hands before touching foods, after visiting the toilet and at other appropriate times of the day. Photographs displayed in the bathroom remind them of good practice. Children use individual face clothes and the consistent, hygienic nappy changing procedures help to reduce the risk of cross infection. Children's health is further protected because there is a sickness policy in place. Written consent is obtained from parents to seek emergency medical advice or treatment, if necessary. Medication and accident records are well detailed and accident records also include details of any injuries a child may have on arrival at the setting. All accidents are monitored and assessed for any required changes to procedures. All the staff hold a current first aid training certificate, which means that they can provide appropriate care for children in the event of an accident.

Children enjoy good, regular exercise, through a range of imaginative daily activities that are always included in the planning, for both indoor and outdoor play. Outside the children jump in and out of the coloured hoops and throw their rubber rings over the cones. Their learning is extended as they are encouraged to count the hoops and the cones and talk about the different colours. Other children ride the wheeled toys and rock on the rocking boats. The children also manipulate the construction games on the outdoor activity tables and they build the giant construction bricks on the floor. Additional organised activities, such as football school groups, music and movement and ballet, help to promote children's physical development.

The children are learning about healthy eating through the food that they eat and through activities they are involved in. They help themselves to raisins, apricots and rice cakes from the snack station, and they drink fresh water from their own named cup. Some children can serve themselves, others need a little help from staff. Children's individual dietary needs are well catered for as the staff obtain relevant information from parents about allergies, likes, dislikes and preferences. An effective daily checking system ensures that meals and snacks are provided accordingly. Meal time is a social occasion when the children eat in small groups at low tables, or in high or low chairs. Young babies are always nursed while being bottle fed. Older children are beginning to understand the importance of good manners and social skills as they help to set the tables. Their learning is challenged, when staff want to know how many plates they need on each table and what colour cutlery they have. All the children are beginning to learn positive social skills.

In the exceptionally well equipped home corners, the children are starting to learn about the value of food as they talk about the wide range of play foods available. They know that oranges are good for them because they contain vitamins, and chips are not so good because they do not have any vitamins in. The children busily prepare to do some baking and they write their own shopping list. They wonder how many eggs and how much flour they will need and they refer to the illustrated recipe book. They know that this tells them exactly what ingredients are required for them to make their cake and they amend their shopping list accordingly. Outside, the children are also learning where food comes from and how some foods grow in the garden. They have a large play tray filled with soil and a selection of vegetables, including cress, carrots, mushrooms, leeks, peppers, parsnips, potatoes and cabbage. They also have some seeds to plant. They talk together about the different foods and what they like best. They take out the weighing scales to see which vegetables weigh the heaviest. The children

sing as they dig and plant 'dig my garden, dig it deep, plant some seeds and watch it grow....' The children are happy and learning and their activity supports their understanding of different foods. Children's learning is constantly extended and reinforced through a good variety of activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The children are cared for in a friendly and welcoming environment. The space available is well organised into different activity areas so that children can move around freely. Their work is very well displayed around the building, making it feel bright and cheerful. This boosts their confidence and helps them to feel a strong sense of belonging in the setting. There is an extremely good range of equipment available. Low level storage and low level tables and chairs ensure that children have easy access to the activities. This means that they can make individual choices of what they wish to do, which positively promotes their independence. The equipment is very appropriate and stimulating for children of all age groups. However, in some areas, some of the toys and equipment are in need of cleaning.

Children are kept safe because the staff carry out and record regular risk assessments, which ensure the general safety of all play areas, both inside and outside in the garden. However, several items of equipment are stored around the baby room, taking up valuable space and making the room cluttered. Therefore, this is not always a safe area for small babies to crawl. The building has good levels of security with an intercom system on the front door. The staff also use passwords with the parents, for protection, when somebody different is coming to collect the children. The children are learning about fire safety through regular fire drills, which are recorded monthly. They are also protected through the good use of safety gates throughout the building.

There is a child protection policy available, which is shared with parents. Children are well protected because the staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibility regarding child protection issues. They have a sound knowledge of the appropriate procedures to follow, should they have any concerns. There is also a designated person available to liaise with child protection agencies and Ofsted, should this be required. The staff are in the process of updating their policy in line with the new Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are clearly happy and settled in the setting. The staff have high expectations of them and they develop a good knowledge of them as individuals. The children are given an excellent range of imaginative and creative activity choices throughout the session. They confidently select their own resources and choose how they want to spend their time. This boosts their independence and their self-esteem. Children are building positive relationships with the staff and with each other. The staff are consistently enthusiastic and passionate about the children and their care. They talk to them explaining, praising and encouraging them. The staff and the children laugh together and enjoy each others company. The children receive endless cuddles of support and they are all treated with equal care and respect. They show motivation and interest in what they are doing and they are learning through their play because they are secure.

The staff have completed the 'Birth to three matters' framework training. They make every effort to provide and deliver a challenging and appropriate curriculum for all the children. The

simple and transparent planning system includes observations of the children, which link into all the aspects of the framework. This means that children are learning and developing at their own pace and their individual needs are being met. The children are provided with an excellent range of activities that offer opportunities for them to develop emotionally, physically, socially and intellectually.

The children explore the natural materials in the treasure baskets, which are many and varied. The youngest children rummage through the different materials, fascinated by the bright colours and the feel of the variety of textures. Some materials are soft and warm, others are hard and the patterned play bricks are soft and squashy. The babies are captivated as they explore and investigate. Some of the older children curiously examine the contents of a play tray containing a mixture of breakfast cereals. They listen to the crunchy sound and feel the crispy, wheat texture and they are aware of the different smells. There is good emphasis on sensory play throughout the nursery and the children all enjoy exploring as they develop their sensory skills.

The babies enthusiastically rattle the shakers and the older children avidly shake the bells and bang on the drum and the tambourine, in their band sessions. They blow the recorders and they stop and start in response to the instructions from the staff. They are excited at the sounds they make and they move their bodies in time to the music. The staff help them to sing and play in time to the tape and the children love it. They are starting to develop a sense of rhythm and coordination.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children benefit from access to an excellent range of resources that are freely available in dedicated learning areas. All the staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. This is reflected in the planning documents, which usually follow a themed approach. Observations, through the key worker system, help the staff to know the developmental stages of the children. Observations always inform the planning, which means that children's individual needs are being met. All activities are reviewed and assessed to ensure they provide the required elements for learning.

Children are learning good communication skills because the staff constantly talk to them, explain, ask questions, listen and respond. They are beginning to understand that print carries meaning as they see notices, posters and letters displayed all around the room. All activities are supported with books, labels and pictures so that children can begin to understand their meaning and their place in the daily routines. In the home corner the children write their shopping lists and take phone messages. In the well resourced writing area, some younger children scribble with crayons and fibre tip pens, trying to master some control over their grip. The older children copy their names from name cards. They listen as the member of staff sounds out the letters and the children copy them onto the paper. They are becoming familiar with the computer, as the staff help them to manipulate the mouse to complete their chosen task. The children are learning to negotiate as they work together and make their decisions. They receive lots praise and support and are proud of their efforts.

There are many opportunities that effectively promote children's mathematical development. A group of children are playing with some extra large animals and they talk about the giant size lion and the long legs and neck on the giraffe. The children see a range of posters and pictures of different shapes and colours, displayed around the room. They use pink sand to fill the see through shapes of the square, triangle and circle. A similar activity takes place in the

water tray using the same shapes with red water. This is a typical example of an activity, created to help to extend and reinforce the children's understanding and learning. The children build the jumbo number floor puzzle and count the coloured beads. They play with the clock puzzles and count the numbers. The good use of the sand timers reminds them of whose turn it is next. They are becoming aware of the concept of time.

The staff provide an excellent range of activities that inspire and challenge all the children. Activities are creative and imaginatively presented and are always backed up with good supporting props, that positively extend and reinforce children's learning. Children are observed to be interested and motivated to play and learn. The staff know when children need support or when they should step back and let them find out for themselves. The staff are knowledgeable and experienced and they help the children to achieve. The children are becoming confident and self-assured as they make their individual choices. They are developing good self-esteem and they are learning. Relationships are well developed at all levels and children are thriving, through stimulating challenges and the excellent care and commitment shown by staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children and parents are welcomed into the setting. The children settle well and benefit from an initial settling in procedure. They are all included in all the activities and their individual, needs are well provided for. They become aware of diversity through access to resources and activities that promote positive images. These include books, jigsaw puzzles and posters, as well as activities that help them to celebrate different religious festivals. Children access a good range of dressing up clothes and boys and girls happily play together washing up in the home corner, as well as building in the construction area. All activities are well supported with books that promote positive images. Photographic evidence shows the children learning about their community and the world around them, through visits from the road safety lady, the policeman and the fireman. The children have further extended their learning by painting pictures and making a wall display.

The children behave well in the setting because they receive meaningful praise and encouragement. The staff have high expectations of their behaviour and the children know what is expected of them. The children are consistently spoken to politely by staff and their individual needs and level of understanding is taken into consideration. Staff discourage negative and socially unacceptable behaviour and praise good behaviour. They help children to understand their feelings through discussion and explanation. The staff present themselves as positive role models to the children and it is from them, that the children are learning to be gentle, kind and caring. The children are also learning to consider other peoples feelings through activities. They have completed a display about being kind to each other. Signs remind them to play nicely together, use kind voices and say please and thank you. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good. Children are cared for in an environment where staff work closely with the parents to provide the best care for the children. Parents are encouraged to take as much part in the setting as they wish. The noticeboard in the entrance hall displays a wealth of information for parents, ranging from sample menus to planning sheets and photographic evidence of activities. The parents receive information about topics and weekly activities that the children will be involved in. They are invited to contribute anything they may have at home that may support the activity. They are also asked for suggestions and ideas. This helps the parents to continue children's activities and learning in the home, if they wish

to. Regular daily discussion takes place to keep parents informed of children's progress. The parents also receive copies of the written observations and planning completed for their own child and they are invited to comment on these. Discussion with parents confirms that they are extremely happy with the care their children receive and their children are happy to attend.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a positive and supportive environment, which effectively promotes their individual needs and challenges their play and learning. The setting offers a warm and welcoming atmosphere where children can progress at their own pace. Clearly defined areas separate the different activities and the children move around freely, making independent choices. The staff are well deployed to ensure that children are well supported in their play.

Appropriate records are well maintained. A set of comprehensive policies and procedures and an effective operational plan are shared with parents and help to support the smooth running of the group. Clear recruitment and selection procedures are in place. These are followed by suitable vetting procedures, induction training and regular appraisals for all staff members. The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The manager and staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They are all involved in activity planning and they use their observations to inform their planning. Staff also show a clear understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use this for planning activities for younger children. Regular staff meetings take place and minutes are recorded and followed up. The manager ensures that the staff are clear about their individual role within the setting. She leads a good team of mainly qualified staff. All staff members show commitment to their own personal development by completing available training courses. All new learning is shared with other staff to keep everybody up to date with new knowledge and information. This results in the staff bringing new ideas into the nursery to benefit the children's play and learning. Following recent Foundation Stage training relating to outdoor provisions, there is a need to improve the organisation of outdoor resources to link in to the learning areas.

Equal opportunities is well promoted in the setting. All children and parents are helped to take a full and active part in all activities. The staff work well together as a team to provide appropriately for the individual needs of the children. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to continue to develop outdoor activities, which support children in all areas of learning. They were also asked to provide written consents and a child protection procedure.

Since then the staff have attended additional training for outdoor activities and they now include outdoor play in the daily activity planning, to benefit children's needs. They also obtain a good range of appropriate written consents from parents to protect children and there is a child protection procedure in place.

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 complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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

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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 all toys and equipment both inside and outside are kept in a clean condition
- improve the storage solutions in the baby room to ensure the valuable floor space is free from clutter and safe for babies.

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):

- further develop the organisation and accessibility of outdoor resources to link into the activity planning.

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