



Just Learning Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY137300
Inspection date	22 February 2007
Inspector	Andrea Caroline Snowden
Setting Address	The Buntings, Cedars Park, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 5GZ
Telephone number	01449 770806
E-mail	
Registered person	Just Learning Ltd
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 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?

Just Learning Day Nursery opened in 2002. It operates from a purpose built building situated on the outskirts of Stowmarket and serves children and their families of the town and from the wider area. The nursery opens five days a week between the hours of 07:30 and 18:00 and is open all year round.

There are currently 149 children aged from five months to five years on roll. This includes 50 funded three and four year olds. The setting supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

Just Learning Ltd employ 26 staff at the nursery, including a cook and an administrator. Of the childcare staff ten hold a level 3 qualification and ten hold a level 2. A number of staff are working towards higher level childcare qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Clear information is sought from parents about their children's health and dietary requirements in order that staff may maintain children's good health and welfare. Record keeping systems are robust to ensure all staff are aware of these needs. Children are beginning to learn about personal hygiene and there are posters and pictures in the bathrooms explaining when hand washing is required and why. However, staff are rarely heard reinforcing this message as they talk to children whilst washing at the sinks. Children are treated effectively following accidents as the staff are appropriately qualified in first aid and the necessary equipment is readily available. Record systems are in place to ensure parents are kept informed of any accidents or incidents involving their child. Procedures are in place for dealing with children who become ill whilst at nursery, and these help reduce the risk of the spread of infection. When a child becomes poorly, they are isolated and made comfortable until parents are able to collect them. Facilities are available in the nursery to allow children to sleep when they are tired and mattresses and sheets are laid out ready for the after lunch rest. When children get down from the lunch table they run to their beds, but children wearing Wellington boots and outdoor shoes run over the sheets where other children will lie, resulting in those children sleeping on dirty bedding. Staff observe this, but do not change the sheets resulting in putting children's health at risk.

Children eat healthily whilst at the nursery. The cook has devised nutritious menus which are varied and balanced. Fresh ingredients are used in preparation and only minimal amounts of processed foods are used, for example at snack time when the children eat processed chicken roll with raisins. Main meals are enjoyed by children and home-made dishes such as cheese, fish and leek pie followed by fresh fruit are served. Children sit in small groups at lunch time and are supported by staff. Children generally have easy access to fresh drinking water and are able to ask staff for more when the jugs are empty. Their dietary needs are well catered for and there are careful systems in place to ensure children are not in danger of receiving foods they should not. Registers are marked and listings on playroom and kitchen walls ensure all staff are aware of children's individual needs.

Children enjoy lots of opportunities for physical play. Children aged under three use separate garden areas to ensure their safety and access equipment which is appropriate to their age and stage of development. They enjoy scooting in the sit and ride cars and pushing dollies in the pushchair in the garden. They manage the tiny climbing cube and slide well and staff are available to give help when needed. They explore in the ball pool in the sensory room and crawl and climb over the baby sized apparatus. A large treasure basket in the sensory room gives children the opportunity to explore natural and man made materials with their senses. The layout of the rooms means there is room for babies to crawl or roll around the floor as their physical movement develops. Older children negotiate space well when riding cycles while manoeuvring around obstacles in the garden. The large play equipment available gives children good opportunities to practise and develop their physical skills, such as balancing and co-ordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The children appear settled in the warm, friendly environment. Play rooms are light, bright and child-centred with lots of displays of children's art work to admire. Low level windows in all rooms enable children to look out into the garden and babies watch with interest as cars and lorries arrive in the car park. The gardens are directly situated off the play rooms meaning that older children can access them independently, promoting choice and variety. Bathrooms are available for each room and children's independence is further promoted because they are able to use these, in safety, alone. The main reception area is equipped with physical play apparatus providing children with alternatives to outdoor play, for example when the weather is too wet. A cleaner is employed by the nursery, but staff explain that all rooms are not cleaned every night, resulting in some carpets not being cleaned for young children to sit or crawl on.

Play resources are varied and mostly all stored at a level where children can reach. They self-select items enjoying the free choice and return equipment when they have finished, promoting respect for the equipment they have just used. Although there are procedures and rotas in place to ensure play equipment is cleaned, some items are dirty and many are worn. Play equipment that very young babies use is cleaned and sterilized to ensure that toys which have been in children's mouths do not pose a risk of infection to others.

Safety in the nursery is promoted because risk assessments take place which enable staff to maintain the safety of children at particular activities. However, systems introduced to assist staff with daily checks for potential hazards, for example electrical safety, do not appear to be used consistently or robustly throughout the nursery. As a result staff are not always alerted to possible hazards before children arrive for the day. The premises are secure and children are unable to leave the rooms unsupervised and procedures are in place to deal with unauthorised persons arriving to collect children from the nursery. Staff are vigilant towards children's safety and when older children kneel on the window-sill to see out staff are swift to ask them to get down. However, opportunities are missed to help children learn about their personal safety in this case because staff do not explain the possible consequences of their actions.

Children's welfare can be safeguarded because staff are clear in their duties when child protection concerns are raised. They are familiar with the procedures and can readily access the Local Safeguarding Children Board documentation. Some staff have completed safeguarding children training and all are aware of the company policy on such matters. The staff know the children well and are able to pick up on any changes to their demeanour and are therefore able to act swiftly if they are concerned for a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Planning for children aged under three follows the 'Birth to three matters' framework and activities are designed to help babies and toddlers acquire and develop new skills. Evaluations of activities and children's participation take place and the children's next steps are identified to ensure progress is made. Children enjoy a variety of toys and equipment throughout the nursery which support their physical, intellectual, social and emotional development.

Staff interaction is generally warm and supportive with children. Babies are cradled gently, foreheads stroked to calm them and reassuring voices used quietly and gently. Staff communicate with children using facial gestures and body language and babies respond well. Cuddles are given and children have clearly formed positive relationships with staff. Whilst in the garden a child notices a member of staff from a different room, calls her name and they run towards each other for a cuddle. Children play side by side and are encouraged to think of others and to be helpful from a young age. A child is encouraged to help another by pushing the sit and ride car to help propel it along.

Babies thrive on opportunities for messy play. They explore the textures of paint and of the custard mix and enjoy using their bodies to make marks on paper. Staff introduce them to new language such as 'splitter splatter' and 'pitter patter' and help older children develop skills by repeating words to reinforce the pronunciation. Their imagination is fostered as staff encourage them to 'pretend we're on a beach in a hot country' whilst they play in the sand tray and they squeal with delight when 'Pooh Bear' whizzes down the slide. Toddlers are learning to count from an early age and they enthusiastically join in number songs. They clearly enjoy taking part in planned activities and are eager and willing. Children's choices are respected and staff are sensitive to the needs of all children. By placing a table outside for puzzles, those children who do not wish to join in energetic games can still be outside with their friends benefiting from fresh air. Toddlers self-help skills are encouraged as they lay the table for snack time, pour their own drinks and manage their own clothes after visiting the bathroom.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. They are encouraged by staff who are caring and have adequate knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Children are given appropriate opportunities to play and initiate their own activities. Staff plan sufficient first-hand experiences, which allow children to build on their natural curiosity as learners. However, teaching is not particularly innovative. There are weaknesses in some areas of learning where opportunities to extend children's thinking are missed, for example, by staff asking open-ended questions. Children's individual progress is observed, although information gained from these assessments is not being used to plan for the next steps in children's learning. Consequently, more able children are not being given sufficient challenge which impacts on children's individual progress.

Planning of activities provides children with a balanced range of experiences which cover the key areas of learning. However, staff are not consistently evaluating focused activities. This does not help staff recognise where they have been successful in promoting learning, and where aspects require improvement. The setting has recently implemented a new format for planning which has a more child-led focus. However, staff do not consistently respond to incidental opportunities to help extend children's learning in meaningful ways, for example, by introducing relevant activities and resources following children's recent holidays.

Children are very independent and are very confident in seeing to their personal needs such as visiting the toilet, and deciding when to have their snack and drink. However, staff do not

always encourage children to persevere at attempting to do up their own coats. Children are able to serve themselves during snack and meal times, and are encouraged to wipe and clear the tables, and wash their cups. Children talk confidently to staff about important people and events in their lives such as birthdays, and expected new brothers and sisters. This helps children to develop a sense of belonging, and begin to understand differences in their lives to others around them. Children are generally developing good relationships and get on well with peers and adults. They learn to co-operate and work well together when they play together in the water tray, each taking turns to fill up the buckets with stones.

Children speak very confidently to peers and adults and express their ideas and feelings well. A child talks about their trip on an aeroplane to Switzerland, and what fun they had in throwing snowballs. They are helped to extend their vocabulary when they talk about lobsters while looking at pictures of food. Children have lots of opportunities of developing their hand-eye-coordination. They practise using chop sticks to pick up objects and are encouraged to use emergent writing in a number of ways, for example, in the vets surgery in the role play area. They are very confident in linking sounds to letters when they say the sound of the words in their name, and enjoy listening to stories. However, staff sometimes use books to occupy children while they prepare learning resources, which does not encourage children to use books for pleasure.

Children count confidently and their understanding of shape and measure is developing well. However, they are not encouraged to develop simple calculation skills in practical ways. Children are helped to develop an awareness of change and patterns when they discuss the weather and days of the week. They are learning about living things when they plant flowers in the garden, and dig for worms when making a wormery. Trips to the local supermarket help children learn about their local environment. Children express themselves through using a range of mediums. They paint, draw and make collages that represent their feelings. They enjoy singing sessions and have a good repertoire of songs and action rhymes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children throughout the nursery enjoy opportunities to learn about the diverse society in which they live. The setting welcomes children from all backgrounds and adopts a flexible approach to meet the individual needs of families. Pictures, posters and play equipment help raise children's awareness of similarities and differences in people's lives and they join in the celebration of some different festivals. Children's individual care needs are met by staff who know the children well. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported. Staff and parents work together to observe and monitor children's progress and individual care plans are in place. Specialist equipment is available to meet children's physical needs and individual support provided by designated staff. The sensory room is a valuable asset to all children in the nursery and is well equipped to meet children's specific needs.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are able to listen to different types of cultural music when they celebrate Chinese New Year. They show delight and joy when they watch the snowman they have made melting in the garden, and show consideration towards others when they share, and offer other children food. Children are

learning about boundaries and beginning to understand right from wrong. Strategies used to manage unacceptable behaviour are appropriate to children's age and level of understanding. Young children are distracted and encouraged to play with another activity whilst older children receive explanations about why behaviour is unacceptable. Children are encouraged to share and play co-operatively from a very young age. Children's sense of belonging to a small community is promoted because they have space to place their personal belongings and are learning their peers names through welcome songs. Children's self esteem is promoted. Staff gain and maintain eye contact with children and offer praise and encouragement. Babies see smiley faces and hear staff clapping to convey positive reinforcement.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents speak warmly of staff's positive and welcoming approach, and parents provide appropriate and relevant information about their child's care needs. This helps to promote consistency of care. However, staff are not seeking relevant information about children's current interests, and experiences. Consequently, this does not enable staff to use familiar experiences and interests, as starting points for learning and teaching. Parents are able to request sight of their child's progress records, and are given opportunities to attend yearly open evenings. This enables them to discuss and experience the benefits of purposeful play opportunities. Although staff give parents verbal feedback about the daily activities, parents are not given sufficient ongoing information throughout the year about the foundation stage curriculum. For example, by giving them suggestions of meaningful activities that can extend learning at home to engage both child and parent in the learning process.

Young children benefit from an effective partnership between their key worker and their parents. There is a useful exchange of information in the morning about children's welfare and systems are in place to ensure all staff coming on duty later that day are informed of issues. At the end of the day parents receive a brief verbal feedback about the child's day, and communication books to inform parents about sleep, feeding and toileting patterns. There is some good information for parents on the notice board and policies and procedures are available. There is an effective procedure to ensure parents can make their concerns and compliments known and be reassured they will be investigated.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are safe because all staff have been vetted and new members of the team are inducted effectively. Procedures for this are robust and volunteers or students are appropriately supervised. Staffing ratios are adhered to but staff deployment is not always effective enough to ensure children's need and welfare is met. At times during the day staff struggle to raise the attention of their colleagues in order to help them meet the needs of the children. At the end of the day when time is used for cleaning and tidying rooms, small groups of children are left with minimum interaction. Some staff are engaged in sweeping the floor, washing up or cleaning sinks whilst another watches on whilst children are at play. Whilst all the required record keeping is in place to maintain children's welfare, the daily registration system is not always being used effectively. Registers are left in the room to which children were taken in the morning and not taken with staff when the rooms divide for the day. Staff forget to mark children in the register

as they arrive and it is not always clear where children are located in the nursery. This could result in children's safety being compromised.

Leadership and management of the nursery is satisfactory. Staff are supported by management through regular meetings and appraisals. They plan the curriculum together, and receive support from the Early Years Education team to improve their practice. Management have implemented appropriate systems to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the provision however, they have not put in place an effective system to evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching. As a result, weaknesses in staff's teaching methods have gone unnoticed, and the more able children are not being given sufficient challenge to ensure they make good progress in all areas of learning. Management actively encourage staff to undertake relevant training, and they have the opportunity for professional development to enhance the welfare, care and learning of the children. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to develop staff's understanding of child development for children aged nought to three and to improve the child protection procedures.

Some staff have received training about the 'Birth to three' framework and the developmental needs of children aged under three years. As a result planning in this area has improved and information has been disseminated to other staff to ensure appropriate interaction during activities. Babies and toddlers now enjoy a range of activities which enable them to grow and develop, communicate, develop their self-assurance and be imaginative.

The child protection policy has been improved to ensure procedures are followed should an allegation be made against staff and local contact details are available from the managers office.

The provider was also asked to increase opportunities for parent's contributions within children's assessments. Some progress has been made in this area, and parents are now able to easily access their child's progress records. The provider needs to develop systems further, to ensure parents are able to share relevant information to enable staff to build on what children already know and can do.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted has received one complaint which required the provider to take action in order to meet the National Standards. The complaint related to standard 2: Organisation. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit on 18 May 2005 to investigate the complaint. As a result of this visit, Ofsted required the provider to ensure minimum staffing ratios applied at all times and that suitable contingency plans were in place to cover staff breaks, holidays and sickness. The provider was also required to take action to ensure the daily registers of children's attendance were maintained and the actual hours of attendance were recorded. Ofsted received a satisfactory response to these requirements and the provider remains qualified for registration.

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 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 the procedures and practices in the nursery to ensure children's good health and to prevent the spread of infection
- ensure systems introduced to protect children are used consistently and robustly throughout the nursery
- improve the deployment of staff further to ensure that there are sufficient staff to meet children's needs effectively at all times of the day. Further improve systems for the daily registration of children.

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):

- introduce a rigorous system that effectively monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching so that areas for improvement are identified and quickly addressed
- improve systems for parents to share information about their child's experiences and interests to enable staff to build on what children already know and can do, and encourage parents to become more involved in their child's learning at home
- ensure that evaluation of focused activities clearly demonstrates if learning intentions have been achieved, and make sure assessment of children's progress is being used to inform future planning of activities, and identifies the next steps in children's learning
- ensure staff fully utilise incidental opportunities to help extend children's learning in meaningful ways.

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