



## Little Owls Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY297422
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 January 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jima Fotopoulou
<b>Setting Address</b>	Century House, Well Lane, Danbury, Essex, CM3 4AB
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<b>Registered person</b>	Little Owls Nursery Ltd
<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?

Little Owls Day Nursery is privately owned and opened in 2005. It operates from five rooms within a converted works facility. It is located on a small business park within walking distance of schools and Danbury Park. A maximum of 83 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 19:00 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 102 children from 12 weeks to under eight years on roll. Of these 26 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 20 members of staff. Fourteen members of the staff, including the manager, hold early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3 or teaching qualifications. Three members staff are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and the Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene as practitioners ensure that current hygiene practices are always maintained. Children are aware that they need to wash their hands before meals, after using the toilet or after messy play in order to keep themselves clean and healthy. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their personal hygiene, for example, by washing their hands on their own after messy play. Visual clues such as notices and photographs in the toilets remind children of the appropriate hygiene procedures at all times. All health related documentation is in place to ensure children's health and well-being and support the practitioners. Younger children's health is effectively promoted as practitioners follow very good procedures for nappy changes which include wearing gloves and aprons in order to protect the children. Sleeping areas are clean and well-maintained; children are provided with individual bedding which ensures that they are effectively protected from cross infections. Practitioners hold current first aid certificates which means that they can respond appropriately in case of emergency.

Children enjoy a healthy and balanced diet which includes fresh fruit, fruit smoothies and hot meals cooked freshly on the premises. Several members of the staff, including the cook, hold Food Hygiene certificates which means that the appropriate food handling techniques are adhered to in order to ensure children's health. All members of staff are aware of any allergies or specific dietary requirements as these are displayed in each room in order to ensure that children's needs are met. Meals are social occasions and children are encouraged to learn about healthy eating through a variety of planned activities, role play equipment and spontaneous discussions with the staff. Younger children are fed according to their needs. Practitioners record feeding times along with nappy changes and other relevant information in individual communication sheets; these are shared with the parents on a daily basis in order to ensure that children are cared for according to their wishes. Drinks are readily available throughout the day in order to ensure that children remain sufficiently hydrated at all times; younger children are encouraged to hold their cups and drink which promotes their independence. Children have access to a book corner where they can rest, relax or play quietly according to their needs.

Children are provided with good opportunities to engage in physical activities both inside and in the fresh air making use of a safe and fully enclosed outdoor play area. They enjoy access to a wide range of outdoor play resources which helps them develop their physical skills. For example, children develop their gross motor skills and coordination by using multi-functional outdoor play equipment; they develop sense of space as they move freely around the rooms and they are encouraged to explore different ways of moving parts of their bodies such as wiggling their fingers or curling their toes. Children enjoy creating pictures and collages using

a variety of media with competence. They develop hand and eye coordination and manipulative dexterity by using scissors, hole punchers and different shape cutters while playing with play dough. All children enjoy playing in the indoor soft play area where they can jump, climb or run in safety and comfort.

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

The provision is good.

Children enjoy access to a child-centred and welcoming environment which allows them to move freely and play in safety and comfort. The premises are bright and colourful; children's work is very nicely displayed which helps children feel valued. Practitioners have good procedures in place for minimising risks to children such as risk assessments which are carried out on a monthly basis and cover the whole setting. They raise children's awareness of keeping themselves safe by encouraging them to tidy away their toys before meals or physical activities in order to avoid tripping hazards. The setting has very good systems in place for the children's safe arrival and departure, for example, parents are allowed in the reception area and the rooms by a member of the staff only in order to ensure children's safety. The setting has CCTV cameras and a coded lock in the main door which leads to the different rooms in order to ensure children's safety and prevent unauthorised access.

Children are kept safe indoors as all fire safety equipment is in place and checked regularly in order to ensure that they remain in good working order. Practitioners carry out regular fire drills with the children in order to help them become aware of the appropriate actions to take in case of a fire. Children are kept safe when on outings as practitioners ensure that parental consents are in place and the appropriate adult:child ratios are always maintained. Practitioners carry out risk assessments prior to the visit and have a first aid kit and parental contact details with them at all times. All safety related documentation is in place to support the practitioners and ensure that parents are kept fully informed.

Children are grouped according to their age in different rooms; they enjoy access to a wide range of toys and equipment which are safe and well-maintained as all practitioners ensure that they are checked as an ongoing process for safety and cleanliness. All children are encouraged to make their own choices regarding their play materials and these are respected. Toys and resources are appropriate for the children's ages and stages of development which ensure that all children can play in safety and comfort.

Practitioners have a good understanding of child protection issues and they are fully aware of signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect. The setting has a child protection policy in place and all members of the staff are aware of the appropriate actions to take in case of child protection concerns. However, the procedure to be followed in case of allegations made against a member of the staff is not clear and is not included in the child protection policy in order to protect the children and support the practitioners. Children are effectively protected from unvetted people as the setting releases children only to their parents or people nominated by them. The setting requests parents to provide them with a photograph of any other person authorised to collect children in their care in order to fully ensure children's safety.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the setting. A key-worker system is in place in order to help children form warm and trusting relationships with a significant adult. Practitioners are caring and sensitive towards the children which helps them feel secure in the setting; children respond well to approachable and caring staff who provide them with very good opportunities to explore and investigate a wide range of activities building on their natural curiosity as learners. A child-centred approach ensures that the environment is organised effectively to support children's learning and play; children's work is displayed on the walls which helps children feel valued. Practitioners play with the children helping them to develop their skills in all areas of learning; they listen and value what children have to say creating an atmosphere where all children can join in without the fear of failure. Children are able to achieve due to the practitioners' good understanding of child development and learning through play.

Younger children are grouped according to their ages in different rooms; they enjoy a bright and stimulating environment which helps them develop their emerging skills. Practitioners base the activities on offer on the 'Birth to three matters' framework and have devised assessment records in order to monitor and assess younger children's progress. Children are able to develop their emerging skills as the practitioners are attentive to their facial expressions and encourage them to babble in order to help them develop their emerging language skills. Children are encouraged to participate in fun and stimulating activities for example, to paint using different parts of their bodies or to make 'music' by hitting their beakers on the radiator. Older children enjoy a bright and colourful environment with a wide variety of toys and resources. Practitioners sit with the children and help them learn and extend their play for example, by reading books to the children or helping them play with the train set. All toys and resources are stored at child height which means that children's independence is fostered. Practitioners encourage and praise children in order to help them develop positive self-esteem and confidence.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Practitioners have a good understanding of the Foundation stage curriculum and they effectively support and extend children's learning. They provide children with a wide range of opportunities to learn through play. Planning is in place to ensure that all children can progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. However, more differentiation between more or less able children needs to be incorporated in the short term planning in order to ensure that children are being challenged appropriately at all times. Key worker observations and assessment records are in place to ensure that children's progress is monitored and assessed. However, the existing assessment records do not clearly reflect the observations made by the practitioners.

Children are confident speakers and have good opportunities to develop their language skills through spontaneous discussion with the staff or through planned activities such as reading books. They are encouraged to match the sounds to the letters, for example, saying that mummy begins with a 'm'. Practitioners support children's learning effectively by encouraging them to write their names using the sounds of the letters as a clue. Children are able to develop their writing skills and use writing for a purpose, for example, by having a notebook in the home

corner. Children enjoy reading books with the staff or with their peers; they hold them correctly and they follow the pictures as clues to the story line. Their mathematical development is effectively promoted as children use numbers in their everyday play, for example, in order to count how many crocodiles they can see in their book. Practitioners help children consolidate their knowledge by asking them appropriate questions, for example, asking children which numbers they have written in their paper. Children are encouraged to use mathematical thinking and language as they play with a tape measure finding which of the walls is wider or calculating who has scored the most goals in the outdoor play area. Children are learning about capacity and quantity as they are encouraged to play in the sand pit filling in different types of containers.

Children are provided with good opportunities to explore how cress and vegetables grow building on their developing understanding of the natural world. They are encouraged to watch a snail in the outdoor play area or to use magnifying glasses in order to observe similarities and differences between the creepy crawlies in the interest table. Children learn about the everyday technology as they are provided with a wide range of programmable toys and equipment as well as a computer which they use with the staff's support. They have good opportunities to develop their imagination for example, by using pretend play equipment in the home corner; they invite adults in their play offering them a 'cup of tea', 'grapes' and 'smoothies'. Children use small world play resources in order to engage in imaginative play. They enjoy singing songs and nursery rhymes which they recite from memory.

Children are provided with daily opportunities to engage in physical play in order to develop balance, coordination and gross motor skills. Practitioners provide children with good opportunities to experience the wider community through planned activities such as celebrating different festivals. Children are able to express their creativity using a wide variety of media in order to create their pictures, collages and arts and crafts. They are effectively supported in developing hand and eye coordination by using a variety of tools such as rolling pins and cutters, scissors, hole punchers, glue and paintbrushes with increasing competence.

Practitioners work with the children offering them ample praise and support in order to help them develop positive self-esteem and confidence. Overall, children are making a good progress towards the early learning goals given their capabilities and stages of development.

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

The provision is good.

All children are treated with respect which makes them feel good about themselves. Practitioners have a positive attitude towards diversity and ensure that all children are included in the life of the setting. Children are provided with a wide variety of opportunities to experience the wider community through planned activities such as celebrating different festivals, dressing up materials, and having access to multicultural resources. The setting ensures that all children have access to the same play opportunities by making any specialist equipment that might be necessary readily available to them. Children are aware of their own needs and the needs of the others as they play cooperatively together, share resources and take turns, for example, in order to read their books in the book corner.

Children are well cared for as practitioners work closely with the parents in order to ensure that individual needs are met. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by knowledgeable and caring staff who work well with the families and supporting agencies in order to ensure that individual needs are met. All related documentation is in place to ensure that children with specific needs are making progress alongside their peers. Children behave well as practitioners use constant praise and encouragement in order to promote good behaviour. Children's daily achievements are celebrated and displayed on the 'friendship' tree. Practitioners use positive techniques when dealing with challenging behaviour; they are consistent in their approach which helps children develop a good sense of right or wrong.

Parents are kept well informed as practitioners exchange both verbal and written information with them on a daily basis. Practitioners also provide parents with regular newsletters in order to keep them up-to-date with the setting's activities and news. Policies and procedures are in place in order to ensure the smooth running of the setting; however, these are not easily available and accessible to the parents. Practitioners have a good understanding of the changes in the regulations regarding the complaints procedure; all the required documentation is in place to ensure that any complaints are dealt with effectively. Parents are aware of the contact details of the regulator as these are displayed, as required. Parents are invited to events throughout the year such as the grandparents sessions and summer and Easter fairs in order to enable them be involved in the life of the setting.

Partnership with parents and carers for the nursery funded children is good. Practitioners operate a flexible settling-in policy in order to help children deal with the separation from their parents. Parents are provided with a prospectus where the main policies and procedures are outlined; however, detailed information regarding the setting's educational programme is not included in the parental prospectus in order to ensure that prospective parents are fully aware of the curriculum their children will follow. Additionally, the sick child policy and the complaints' procedure are not included in the prospectus in order to ensure that prospective parents are kept fully informed about the setting's systems to prevent spread of infections and to deal with any concerns. The setting ensures that parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through regular written reports and open evenings where information between the parents and the key workers is exchanged. The setting encourages parents to become involved in meaningful ways in their children's learning by having the topic of the week displayed on the pre-school's notice board; practitioners have established a travelling owl which spends a weekend at each child's home in order to help parents become more involved in the setting's life.

Children explore other cultures and beliefs through planned and free flow activities such as playing with multicultural resources or celebrating different festivals. Children are well behaved, they played cooperatively together sharing resources and taking turns, for example, to look through the magnifying glass. Children's self-esteem and confidence are effectively promoted as the practitioners offer ample praise and encouragement. Children are confident speakers; they approach adults and they are happy to invite them in their play and make pretend 'cups of tea' for them. They have access to toys and resources which support their personal progress well. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and settled in the setting and they enjoy access to a well-organised, child-centred and welcoming environment which helps them feel secure and confident. All children are supported effectively in order to make good progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals.

Practitioners maintain documentation appropriately and all the required policies and procedures are in place in order to support the staff and ensure children's health, safety and well-being. However, Ofsted contact details are not included in the lost and uncollected child policies, as required. Practitioners maintain accurate registers in order to ensure children's safety and support their practice. Most practitioners, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and they have attended further training in order to ensure that their knowledge remains up-to-date. Staff induction and monitoring systems are in place to support new and existing members of staff. The setting has robust procedures in place for appointing new members of staff which ensures children's safety and welfare. Confidentiality is maintained and existing files are stored safely.

Leadership and management is good. The manager builds committed and strong teams through regular team meetings and informal discussions; the manager has established two different types of awards in order to keep the staff motivated and interested. The manager monitors and manages the provision effectively through direct observation; staff's appraisals are in place to ensure that staff's work is assessed and monitored and their training needs are discussed and identified. This positive approach ensures that all members of the staff are provided with equal opportunities to develop professionally. The manager ensures that all children are included in the setting by providing them with the same opportunities to play and learn; the manager checks the quality and quantity of the staff's observations in order to ensure that children's progress is effectively monitored and assessed.

Overall children's needs are met.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to ensure that fire drills are regularly practised with the children and to review and update written policies and procedures regarding complaints, equal opportunities and special needs.

The setting practises fire drills with the children on a monthly basis and these are recorded in the fire drills log. The setting has clearly marked fire exits and evacuation cots for the younger children. The setting has updated the written policies regarding equal opportunities, special needs and the complaints procedure in order to ensure that they are in line with current legislation. The setting reviews the policies and procedures as an on-going process as they are regarded as working documents.

At the last Nursery Education inspection the setting was asked to develop the links for communication to encourage parents and carers to become involved in their children's learning



in meaningful ways and to continue to develop the range of resources in order to maximise children's learning.

The setting has a flexible budget which allows for new toys and resources to be added on a monthly basis. All room leaders are encouraged to request new toys and equipment to be bought in order to help children maximise their learning. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning in meaningful ways as the setting provides them with information regarding the topic of the week which is displayed on each room's notice board. Practitioners have established a 'travelling owl' which goes to a child's home for the weekend in order to help parents be involved in the setting's life. Additionally, parents are provided with regular newsletters and key-worker written reports in order to be informed about their children's progress and their life in the setting. Practitioners have also established open evenings for parents which provides them with opportunities to discuss their children's progress with their key-worker.

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

On 08 December 2005 Ofsted received concerns regarding staff deployment and children's safety. These concerns related to National Standards 2 (Organisation), 6 (Safety), 7 (Health), 9 (Equal opportunities), 12 (Working in partnership with parents and carers) and 13 (Child protection). Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit on 15 December 2005 and found no evidence to substantiate a breach of the National Standards 2, 7, 9, 12 and 13. However, a breach of the National Standard 6 (Safety) was identified and the provider was given one action as follows (1) assess the risks to children aged under 36 months in relation to the outdoor multi-play equipment and take action to minimise these. In addition a breach of the National Standard 14 (Documentation) was also identified and two more actions were set as follows (1) notify Ofsted at the earliest opportunity of any significant changes to the premises and (2) ensure that all records relating to day care are consistently maintained. This refers to consistency between registers and dating all accident records. A satisfactory response to these actions was received on 11 January 2006. The provider continues to remain qualified for registration.

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):

- update the child protection policy to include a clear procedure to be followed in case of allegations made against a member of the staff
- ensure that the setting's policies and procedures are easily available and accessible to parents, including complaints procedure and sick child policies and that Ofsted details are included in the lost and uncollected child policies.

### **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 assessment records to clearly reflect the observations made and develop short term planning to include more differentiation between more or less able children
- further develop the parents' prospectus to include more information regarding the educational programme of the pre-school.

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)