

Cotton Tails Too

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507648
Inspection date	18 January 2007
Inspector	Rachel Wyatt
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Registered person	David & Nicola Cotton
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?

Cotton Tails Too is one of two nurseries run by Cotton Tails Day Nurseries Limited. The nursery opened in 2001 and operates from a converted house situated near to the shopping centre in Rubery. A maximum of 49 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 until 18:00 for 52 weeks of the year, closing for Bank Holidays. All children have access to a secure outdoor area.

There are currently 59 children aged from three months to under eight years on roll. Children come from a wide catchment area, as most parents travel to work. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/OR disabilities, and also children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 14 staff, of whom 10, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery has the support of a mentor teacher from the local authority, and is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association. The nursery has the 'Growing Together' Quality Assurance Scheme's Gold Award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Babies' and children's health and hygiene are supported by exemplary procedures. Individual care needs and routines are discussed and agreed with parents so that babies and children's personal hygiene, comfort and dietary requirements are clearly understood and effectively provided for by staff. The setting's bright décor, inviting play, toilet and nappy change areas, and the use of soft furnishings all contribute to children's comfort and well-being.

Children's independence in toileting and hand washing is positively promoted by sensitive help from staff, visual reminders and access to child-size equipment. Nappy change routines are relaxed, well managed and ensure babies' and toddler's comfort. From an early age, children learn about the importance of good hygiene through regular hand washing, brushing their teeth, and helping with hand and face wiping after meals. The staff ensure nursery areas and equipment are kept very clean, but without inhibiting children's enjoyment of messy play or their efforts to be independent, such as feeding themselves. Older children often offer to help with some washing up or clearing up, for instance after snack times, and staff readily enable them to do this.

Children's individual health and medical needs are clearly recorded and understood. Staff work closely with parents to ensure children are looked after in accordance with their wishes. Should children be unwell, have an accident or require medication, effective procedures are in place to ensure they have prompt appropriate treatment. In such circumstances parents are kept fully informed about their child's condition. Relevant consents and records are consistently maintained in accordance with the setting's medication, illness and accident procedures. Parents receive daily feedback on their children's care, routines and diet, and are promptly notified of any other situations which could affect their welfare, such as instances of an infectious illness.

Babies and children have plenty of exercise. Babies are looked after in a spacious room, where they can roll, crawl and move around safely. Caring staff, and the availability of sturdy equipment and furniture, aid babies' confidence in standing and their emergent walking. There are plenty of toys to encourage their manipulative skills and coordination. Regular outdoor play is provided in a secure garden where children can play different games and use a variety of wheeled, climbing and balancing toys. The setting works with parents to ensure suitable outdoor footwear and clothes are provided to cater for all types of weather. Robust sun protection procedures are in place. Toddlers and children also take part in regular indoor physical play, including dance, music and movement.

Everyone in the nursery works with the cook, who is passionate about healthy eating, to ensure children are very well nourished. Snack and meal times are a very important part of the setting's daily routine. They contribute to babies' and children's good health and really foster their social and independence skills. Menus are balanced, varied and inviting. Children are offered plenty of fruit and vegetables, tasty meals, plus some treats, such as home made cakes. Individual dietary needs, babies' feeds and their weaning requirements are all well managed as these are discussed and agreed with parents.

Children and adults really enjoy snack and meal times. They sit together, food is presented in attractive, appropriate portions. Older children serve themselves, agreeing with staff how many spoonfuls they will have. Staff ensure that babies enjoy the same opportunities for social interaction and to feed themselves as their older peers. Throughout the nursery, babies and

children enjoy their food and eat well, often having second helpings. They also become adept at feeding themselves, increasingly using child-size cutlery and managing drinks from beakers or cups. Older children carefully pour drinks for themselves and often help with preparing snacks, such as peeling oranges. Food preparation and storage areas are all clean and well organised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is assured through effective security arrangements and robust procedures to minimise the risk of hazards. The outdoor play area is fully enclosed by high fencing, and in part covered by a safety surface. Effective procedures, including humane pest control, frequent equipment checks and use of risk assessments, ensure the outdoor area can be safely enjoyed by children. Access to the nursery building is carefully monitored by managers and staff, with the additional benefit of the use of close circuit television. Areas within the building are kept clear and free from hazards. Good use is made of checks and risk assessments plus safety equipment to ensure all areas remain suitable for babies' and children's use.

Children are carefully supervised as they move around the building, use equipment, play outside or go on walks. However, staff do not inhibit children's independence or their enjoyment. As a result children are encouraged to use physical play equipment correctly. They learn to walk down stairs carefully, holding on to the handrails. Staff enable children to have challenges and to enjoy messy activities or exploratory play, whilst ensuring floor surfaces are safe and free from any trip or slip hazards.

Outings are well prepared for. Parents give informed consent, for example to a local walk, and staff ensure children understand what is expected of them. Good adult to child ratios ensure children's safety and also enable them to get the most out of the experience. On a rainy day walk to the post box, three and four-year-olds engage in many rewarding observations and discussions with the adults, and show how well they understand the importance of road safety. Regular fire drills are also organised well, to ensure everyone knows their role during an emergency and to ensure babies' and children's welfare in such circumstances.

Children use good quality age-appropriate furniture and equipment. Babies and toddlers have plenty of sturdy toys, equipment and furniture to use. Parents' consents are sought to babies and toddlers using low-level chairs when they are ready. High priority is given to ensuring equipment and toys are well maintained. Electrical and fire safety equipment are properly installed and also checked regularly.

Children are protected from harm. Priority is given to ensuring that adults caring for children attend child protection training. Managers and staff understand their responsibility to promote children's health and welfare as they carry out their duties. From the outset parents are also made aware of the setting's role in safeguarding children. Staff and parents consistently exchange information about aspects affecting children's well-being, such as details of any existing injuries or any changes to collection arrangements.

The nursery has appropriate child protection procedures which are broadly understood by managers and staff. They have ready access to policies, guidelines and contact numbers for referrals, which are located around the nursery. However, the child protection policy includes some inaccuracies which potentially compromise children's welfare and the management of

any investigation in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against someone working in the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have an enjoyable time at nursery. They are provided with rewarding activities and stimulating toys and resources. Babies and children are settled and involved. Staff chat easily to them during play and routines, and ensure that new children are reassured and become familiar with their surroundings. The atmosphere is relaxed and fun.

Younger children's play and progress is very much supported by the nursery's commitment to the ethos of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Babies and children benefit from many worthwhile opportunities for free expression and exploration, for example whilst playing with sand and the contents of treasure baskets. Their confidence and independence is encouraged as they have plenty of choice and can help themselves to many toys. During play and meal times babies and children socialise with their peers and adults. Throughout the nursery children become very capable at feeding themselves and managing meal time routines well.

Planning and assessment for younger children is securely embedded in 'Birth to three matters'. Regular observations are carried out cross referenced to relevant developmental charts. However, whilst much information is gathered about children, there is no clear link between the outcomes of assessments and short term planning, so there is not always a full picture of which aspects of a child's development need promoting next.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are settled. They appreciate the staff's involvement in their play, so they are often busy and purposeful. Staff promote children's interest through good questioning and their positive responses to children's efforts. Children's recognition of letters and sounds is fostered through enjoyable games and practical opportunities to identify their names on their work, place mat, coat peg or on the 'super star' behaviour chart. Their pencil control and emergent writing is developing well through regular mark making activities; several older children form recognisable letters. Children are sociable, confidently speaking to their peers and adults and they readily recall events. They listen carefully and contribute eagerly to stories and enjoy rhymes.

Children count confidently during activities and routines. They use numbers in practical contexts, for example during lunch they count the spoonfuls of food as they serve themselves. Older and more able children are recognising numbers up to five, and in some cases to ten, with increasing accuracy. Staff provide a good range of resources to support children's awareness of number, shape and sequences, though at times the organisation of these activities makes it difficult for one member of staff to fully support all the children involved and to assess their level of understanding.

Children are observant. They adeptly describe and, in their artwork, recreate features of their local environment. The current topic on 'outside' has prompted children's very realistic paintings of different types of transport and local scenes. During a walk to the post box to send their letters, children show they understand about road safety and the role of the postal service. Staff ensure their understanding is further supported by other related activities, for instance during a music and movement session featuring a 'Postman Pat' action song. Children also

readily talk about aspects of their own lives. Children confidently use the computer and appreciate photographs taken on the digital camera. They make models and structures out of different construction toys and materials, such as a large cardboard train which they enjoy playing with.

Children's creativity is also reflected in their role play and expressive drawings and paintings. They talk about textures and colours and enjoy music and movement. During physical activities they move in different ways and balance with increasing control.

Children are offered rewarding activities and topics which are recorded in long and medium term plans. These show how children's learning will be fostered across the six areas of learning and consistently include opportunities for children to find out about aspects of different cultures and celebrations. Children's learning is supported by a good range of resources and equipment. These include 'Flip' the cuddly bear who is an important part of the children's early education provision. The presence of 'Flip' helps new children settle, others to join in and all children are enjoying hearing about his adventures during recent overnight stays with different members of staff. They eagerly await the forthcoming plans for him to stay at their homes overnight which will further consolidate already very good home-nursery links.

Assessment is based on observations of children's responses to focus activities. The information from these is cross referenced to developmental charts covering the Foundation Stage stepping stones and early learning goals. A well-presented, easy to read annual report on children's progress is based on this information and a copy is given to parents. However, in the interim, there is no consistent evaluation of each child's specific skills in order to identify whether they need greater challenges or how they may need help to move onto the next stage in their learning. As a result there is no clear link between assessment outcomes and short term planning. Short term plans reflect differentiation in general terms of how younger and older children may need support or can be encouraged, but their individual learning needs are not identified in plans. Staff do, however, know children well and generally adapt their approach to suit their differing abilities, and the setting is already in the process of reviewing assessment procedures.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Fostering children's self-esteem, giving positive praise and recognising their individuality is at the heart of the setting's ethos and practice. Babies and children really feel valued because throughout the nursery they can see images of themselves, especially from their 'All about me' posters displayed in their base room, which reflect their characteristics and preferences. Similar posters are displayed for each member for staff. In the pre-school area, parents and children also contribute to a 'special person' board which enables each family in turn to celebrate their child's interests and circumstances in pictorial form. Babies' and children's individual care needs are clearly identified from the time they join the nursery through detailed records and discussions with parents. Children with disabilities and learning difficulties are well supported, and the nursery actively involves their parents in decisions and reviews, along with any outside agencies.

Children's awareness of diversity is effectively promoted. They take part in many rewarding activities linked to a wide range of festivals and celebrations. Through books, toys and displays they see positive images of race, culture and gender and can also explore feelings and familiar scenes. Children's individual cultural, religious and language needs are acknowledged so that, for instance, information is exchanged about their home languages and appropriate support and resources provided, such as dual language books.

Children behave very well. They make choices about what they are going to do, develop independence and take responsibility for aspects of their own care or safety. They relate well to each other. Babies and younger children are supported in their interactions to help them understand about sharing and turn taking. Older children are often kind and caring, helping a friend or enjoying assisting with clearing away, tidying up or completing a simple task. Staff have positive attitudes. They readily encourage and support children's good behaviour. In pre-school three and four-year-olds feel a real sense of achievement when their good behaviour is acknowledged through praise and an opportunity to progress up the 'super star' chart. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are warmly welcomed in the nursery and their wishes and views appreciated regarding their children's welfare and learning. Parents are well informed about the provision through an easy to read prospectus and regular newsletters. Additional information is given to them about the organisation of the room their child will be based in so that parents are well aware of the care arrangements and activities their children will experience. On a daily basis they are given reassuring feedback about their baby's and child's care and play. Effective procedures are in place should parents have any concerns, including suitable arrangements for recording any complaints.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. They are very well prepared for their child entering early education. They receive comprehensive information about the Foundation Stage, including attendance at open evenings. Their views on their child's skills and interests are very much valued so parents contribute information for their child's progress record and the pre-school's 'special person' board. Parents are actively encouraged to support their children's learning at home, for example by using effectively presented 'Time together' activity packs or helping their child to complete tasks, such as decorating their place mat or art folder. Parents receive positive feedback on their children's progress through well written reports and recently initiated 'Wow' books, which show children's achievements in mainly pictorial form.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are safeguarded and parents reassured by the setting's effective recruitment, vetting and ongoing monitoring arrangements. There are robust procedures for ensuring staff have relevant qualifications and experience, and that they are suitable to work with young children. An emphasis on staff induction, training and development, ensures adults understand their responsibilities within the nursery and that they keep up to date with good practice issues, for example relating to children's welfare and the care of under threes.

Children benefit from being looked and supported by kind, caring staff who are effectively deployed. Managers and staff ensure play and care areas are inviting, well equipped and resourced, and that sessions run smoothly. Documents and records used throughout the nursery support children's care and reflect their parents' wishes. A comprehensive operational plan gives managers and staff valuable guidance. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated and, apart from minor inconsistencies in the child protection policy, generally reflect current regulations and good practice.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. Early education sessions are run by friendly confident staff who enthuse the children so they are keen to participate and eager to learn. Managers and staff work together to provide children with rewarding topics and activities which cover all areas of learning. Staff monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the

nursery education provision through the assessment process and managers are already alert to the need to further develop links between assessment and short term planning. The proprietor and nursery manager are positive role models in their enthusiasm for training and for the further development of the setting's early education provision. Along with other members of staff they are updating their knowledge through training, and incorporating new ideas to enrich the children's play and learning. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to two recommendations concerning recording children's late arrivals and providing parents with Ofsted's details as part of the setting's complaints procedures. These have been effectively addressed so that children's arrival times are accurately recorded ensuring their safety and welfare. Parents are given clear guidance on how to make a complaint, including how to contact the regulator. The complaints procedures have been further revised to reflect changes to the National Standards regarding parents' rights if they express their concerns in writing.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to key issues regarding opportunities for children to self select activities or equipment, behaviour management, children's participation in large group activities and incorporating evidence of differentiation in planning. Children are able to help themselves to books and many toys which aids their choice and independence. They enjoy taking part in whole group activities, joining in discussions and following actions and instructions, staff encouraging those who are less able or confident. Consistency in managing children's behaviour means they know what is expected of them and respond to the adults' positive responses and praise. Short term planning broadly reflects children's differing needs, but lack detail to show how children's individual skills will be supported or extended, so this is an area for improvement.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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):

- develop the child protection policy so it more accurately reflects procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer
- improve the links between assessment and planning for children under three, in order to use observations to plan for the next steps in their play, learning and development.

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 assessment and short term planning to clearly identify individual children's learning needs and to show how these will be met.

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