



Oaklands College Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY268301
Inspection date	14 February 2007
Inspector	Maura Pigram
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Registered person	Oaklands College
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?

Oaklands College Nursery opened in 2003 and operates from The Manor House in the grounds of the Smallford Campus. It was previously located at the City Campus site. It has the use of seven rooms, a kitchen, low-level toilets and a disabled toilet. There is an enclosed outdoor area and college grounds for outdoor exploration. Children whose parents or carers are students or staff at the college attend the nursery. It also serves the local community.

A maximum of 36 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open for 49 weeks of the year. It is open from 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 57 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 10 children receive funding for early education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 12 members of staff. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member is working towards a level 4 qualification. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and regular qualified teacher input. The nursery has completed the Herts Quality Standards Award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment. Their health is well promoted because staff members follow good hygiene routines which prevent the spread of infection. For example, staff ensure nappy changing procedures are carefully carried out and dispose of soiled materials safely. Older children independently use the toilets and know to wash and dry their hands thoroughly. Consequently, they develop good hygiene habits for later life. Children's independence skills such as putting on their own coats and visiting the toilet are well fostered because staff are very encouraging and give children support as necessary. Sinks are at a low level and suitable steps are also available if needed. Sufficient soap and a hand dryer are easily accessible to the children. The regular procedure of cleaning resources and equipment also contributes to the good health of the children. As a result, children's health is well protected as the provision has high standards of hygiene and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection.

The daily routine is well structured. Children eat their meals in small groups with the staff sitting with the children providing positive interaction and support as necessary. They are offered varied and nutritious snacks and meals such as shepherd's pie and chicken casseroles. Vegetarian options are always available. All food is freshly prepared each day. Older children help themselves to their cups, knives and forks. This promotes their independence. Staff who work with infants under two follow children's individual routines. Babies who are teething or being weaned are well supported. During meals they are provided with their own spoon so that they can be fully involved. As a result, children develop good appetites and are well nourished.

Children's physical skills are very well nurtured. Children use the enclosed garden throughout the day wearing their newly acquired wet suits. During this time they have great fun splashing in the puddles. They have use of an interesting range of equipment, which includes a wooden boat, tyres and wheeled toys. Babies are regularly taken for walks so that they can enjoy being in the fresh air. Children are offered a balance of active and quieter activities, such as group story sessions. Children's needs are discussed closely with parents. As a result, children are able to rest and sleep according to their individual needs. Toddlers, and some older children, have the opportunity to take an afternoon nap so that energy levels are refreshed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure, bright and welcoming environment. They have comfortable space in which to play, eat and rest. Babies and young children sleep safely and comfortably. They are frequently monitored by vigilant adults who have an effective awareness of security.

As a result, children's welfare is well promoted. Indoor and outdoor space is effectively organised and the environment is child friendly. There is a high ratio of adults to children present. This means that children can play and explore safely. Consequently, children are able to take risks while being appropriately supervised.

Very good safety practices are in place, for example, during a walk from the on-site farm, children are escorted safely. Some of the children wear florescent jackets ensuring they can be easily seen. Staff talk to the children about keeping safe and remind them to listen and look for oncoming traffic. As a result, children learn how to keep themselves safe. Infants and toddlers are kept safe by the use of safety straps on high chairs and buggies. Wrist straps are used for toddlers. This gives them a sense of independence while keeping them safe. In addition, children practise the evacuation procedure so they know what to do on an emergency.

The toys and resources available in all play rooms are in good condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards. Children can select what they want to play with because they are stored within reach. There is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection. Staff members are fully aware of the nursery's child protection procedures and what to do if they have concerns about a child in their care. Current policy incorporates the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Consequently, children's welfare is well protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy in a supportive and caring environment. They quickly settle into the well-organised daily routine. The children are helped to feel secure and have very good levels of self-esteem. They enjoy their time at the nursery and take part in a broad range of interesting indoor and outdoor activities. Children initiate their own play with a good balance of positive adult interaction. Their language development, in particular, is very well fostered. Staff engage children in conversation, listen to their answers and questions offering new words to build their vocabulary. Very good use is made of spontaneous opportunities to enhance the children's learning experiences. For example, recently the older children delighted in making kites to fly in the windy weather.

Younger children are offered well-organised activities. The staff are familiar with the 'Birth to three' framework and use this in their planning to ensure children's abilities and independence are fostered. The children enjoy using their imaginations in role play, taking on the role of people they are familiar with such as hairdressers. They love joining in with the older children's activity of Dragon dancing. Here, they have the opportunity to bang drums, shake musical instruments and dance with scarves. Infants under two play contentedly. They have use of a wide range of bright and colourful toys. Activities are regularly arranged for the infants to enjoy sensory play such as exploring with sand, water, pasta and jelly. However, there are limited sensory items such as mirrors and household items within easy reach for the children to explore these spontaneously.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

The children are progressing well, supported by staff who have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children of this age group develop. The learning environment is well planned and organised effectively. The outdoor area is well used offering meaningful experiences to the children. This means that children have a positive attitude to learning. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure that children's starting points are known. The structure of the routine allows for all staff to be very familiar with the children. This means that children effectively progress along the stepping stones. Plans are based on termly themes such as space and night and day. They show a clear sense of purpose and cover the six areas of learning. Assessments are used to evaluate children's progress. However, these are not always used to plan future activities. Staff use a stimulating range of teaching methods to meet children's needs and help them progress. All of their time is spent with the children so that their play is effectively supported. However, occasionally staff do not always build on what older or more able children can do, potentially limiting the children's progress in some areas of learning. They manage children's behaviour skilfully, helping them to share and to take turns. This enables the children to learn how to play together harmoniously.

Children quickly settle and engage in activities. They receive individual adult support as well as opportunities to work as part of a group. Children are regularly praised by staff, eagerly participate in activities, such as singing favourite songs and amusing rhymes and are excited to learn. Children enjoy using the nursery's outdoor area including the extensive college grounds. The children are given every opportunity to explore and discover as staff make good use of the stimulating surroundings. Good staff deployment ensures there are sufficient staff to support children's learning. This means that children are able to gain full advantage of being outdoors. They take part in a number of planned and spontaneous activities, such as exploring a fallen tree and taking walks to visit the new born piglets and lambs. During this time children's language and understanding is skilfully extended and supported.

Children respond with enjoyment when listening to stories, singing nursery rhymes and during music sessions. They are able to concentrate well during whole group times as the staff make these sessions fun and interesting. Effective use of resources such as drums and various material enliven these sessions. Meaningful opportunities are given to children so that they can become aware of differences in language and culture. The imaginative methods of teaching help children consolidate their learning by re-visiting the same idea in different ways. During the exploration of Chinese New Year, for example, children are encouraged to take part in a wide range of stimulating activities such as Chinese dancing and Tai Chi. In addition they contribute to an attractive display and learn how to say Happy New Year in Chinese.

Children can count confidently and show increasing skill in recognising and using numbers to support their play. For example, they recognise number patterns on dice and play food. Children enjoy activities that introduce them to shape. Fun interaction sessions help children to develop a curiosity about shapes. As a result they are able to recognise triangles, circles and cubes. However, older or more able children are not always supported to compare or combine numbers within their play or routines. The nursery has a range of interactive toys and computers to support learning. Children have resources such as art, craft and drawing equipment readily available. They delight in making Valentine cards for their friends and family, some children begin to form their names. Drawings, books the children have made and paintings are used to form attractive displays. Overall, children are making good progress in all areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued. The nursery operates a key worker system. This means that familiar staff care for the children and warm relationships quickly develop. They receive a warm welcome and are helped to feel secure. The flexible settling-in procedure means that staff have the opportunity to get to know the children and their parents so that individual needs can be met. A Special Educational Needs Coordinator works closely with parents, children and outside agencies to ensure all children are fully included. Praise is given freely to the children, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Any issues of unwanted behaviour are sensitively managed and effectively discussed with parents so that these can be resolved. Staff calmly and firmly remind children to share and to be kind to other children. Consequently, they learn how to manage their own behaviour.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are helped to gain a good understanding of the wider community. They regularly take part in meaningful and stimulating activities. They have easy access to resources which help value diversity and an understanding of different cultural and religious festivals. This helps the children to develop a positive understanding of the differences between people.

Children benefit from the close partnership with parents and carers that the nursery has formed. Parents receive information about the nursery which informs them about the services it has to offer. They have the opportunity to join the active committee group to ensure all parties work together. Regular newsletters are produced and there is a notice board providing relevant information. In addition, displays of the planning linked to the 'Birth to three' framework show parents the themes being followed. Parents of children under one year are supplied with a diary showing their children's daily activities. Consequently there is a continuation of care for these children between the nursery and the children's parents. There is a procedure in place to record any complaints which complies with the requirements of the national standards. This means that parents are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns regarding the welfare of their children.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good.

Information about nursery education is provided for parents as the nursery makes all its policies and procedures available for parents. The planning grids and the learning intentions, for example, are on display for parents to read. In addition, detailed posters give parents information about the different areas of learning. Parents have an opportunity to exchange information about their children on a daily basis. In addition, they are invited for informal meetings to discuss their child's progress so that they are fully informed about their child's achievements. Children regularly take home their individual pieces of work. Consequently, there is a positive partnership between the children's home and the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There are effective staffing levels resulting in good standard of care. The staff ratio often exceeds requirements. Consequently, the adult: child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play. The key worker system is effective. The children are well known and the organisation of activities and meal times enable staff to get to know the children extremely well. As a result, children are confident and respond well to the interested adults. Varied use of time, the interesting surroundings and staff deployment contributes effectively to children's good health, safety and enjoyment. Plans are in place to create a further post of a special needs co-ordinator. This means that the diverse needs of varied aged children are identified easily. Therefore, staff have a clear sense of purpose and are committed to continual improvement. The recent introduction of wet suits has enhanced all children's play and learning experiences. There is a close partnership with the management of the college to ensure the children's welfare is paramount. As a result, the manager and her staff are well supported in all issues related to the care and welfare of the children. In addition, there are long-term plans to develop this effective nursery.

Policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. The manager along with the team reflects on these regularly to ensure the needs of the children are protected. This has a positive impact on the care and welfare of children.

The leadership and management of funded children is good.

The manager has a clear vision for the nursery education with a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all children. The manager consistently reviews the provision and is proactive in identifying strengths and weaknesses. She is a good role model often taking an active role in the children's learning and development. The learning environment is well organised and led by competent and enthusiastic staff. They work together very well enabling the children to make good progress through the Foundation Stage. The staff plan many stimulating activities and make good use of spontaneous play opportunities. The manager continually monitors and evaluates the curriculum to identify strengths and areas for improvement. A partnership with qualified teacher support to review ways of working is under development. Staff development is well supported with good use made of 'in house' training. As a result, the manager is committed to providing a high standard of care and nursery education for all children. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the provider was asked to maintain a system for registering children's and staff's hours of attendance. This is now in place which means that in the event of an emergency there is a record of who is at the nursery. The provider was also asked to review the policies and procedures related to nappy changing, the provision of sun hats and special educational needs. These have been reviewed to enhance the children's care. The procedure for nappy changing is continually reviewed to ensure the children's welfare is met.

Individual sun hats are available for the children to protect them in hot weather. The special educational needs policy is now updated to ensure an inclusive practice is operated.

At the previous education inspection the provider was asked to develop the short term plans so that they show what the children are to learn. These are now in place which ensures children have identified learning intentions from each planned activity. They were also asked to provide physical challenges for older and more able children. The introduction of the wet suits has contributed to this improvement. The children are now able to access the challenges in the garden in all weather conditions.

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.

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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):

- increase opportunities for children under two to explore interesting objects and resources.

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):

- improve further challenges for older or more able children in everyday routine activities with particular reference to problem solving
- use assessments to identify learning needs and plan the next step in children's learning.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk