



## Young Discoverers Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY337160
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 February 2007
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<b>Registered person</b>	South Hill Centre
<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?

Young Discoverers Pre-school opened at its present site in 2006 having been situated for the previous 10 years in South Hill Church. It now operates from two rooms within South Hill Early Years Centre. This is a purpose-built building situated in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 30 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.45 and from 12.45 to 15.00 during school term times. A lunch club is also available each day and runs from 11.45 to 12.35. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 69 children from two to four years on roll. Of these, 23 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school 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 pre-school employs 11 staff. All of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is currently working towards a higher level of qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, appropriate nappy changing procedures are in place to minimise the risk of cross-infection, tables and tablecloths are cleaned before and after children use them at snack and meal times and most of the staff have recently attended first aid and food hygiene training. In addition, medication and accident records are used appropriately to monitor and protect children's health. Children learn to understand some simple, good health and hygiene practices, such as washing their hands after using the toilet and before eating their lunch. However, they are not asked to wash their hands before eating their snack and therefore they are not developing a full understanding of good hygiene routines for later life.

Children are appropriately nourished. They bring a packed lunch from home to lunch club and at snack time they are encouraged to eat fruit as well as a biscuit and can choose water, milk, orange or blackcurrant squash to drink. Drinking water is available at all other times if they are thirsty. Children's health and dietary needs are met because the setting works well with parents. Information about food allergies and requirements is sought before children begin to attend and any particular needs are carefully displayed to ensure that staff are always aware of them when preparing or serving food. Children have some opportunities to learn about healthy eating and healthy living. For example, staff sometimes discuss the importance of eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day whilst children are eating their fruit at snack time and some planned activities, such as cooking or Harvest Festival celebrations, are also used to discuss issues about eating healthily. However, these opportunities are limited and as a result, children are not developing a good understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle.

Children take part in regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors. As a result, they are developing motor skills and coordination and are learning to enjoy exercise. They have access to a covered outside play area, which they can use even in poor weather. Here they can play with sand and water or use the climbing frame and slide. There is also an open area in which they have sufficient space to ride bikes, play with bats and balls, hoops and balance beams. Inside they regularly enjoy energetic music and movement sessions in which they learn to move in a variety of different ways, such as skipping, galloping and hopping. Children's large physical development is therefore well supported. Active play is carefully balanced with less active play and children have opportunities built into their daily routine to rest so that they do not become overtired. For example, a comfy book corner provides a quiet area for relaxation and activities such as sand play are provided in the outside play area so that children who do not wish to be energetic can choose to play something which is less strenuous.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment in which the risks to their safety have been minimised by the use of well-implemented policies and procedures. For example, regular risk assessments are carried out and the door to the play room is monitored at busy times at the beginning and end of sessions so that children cannot leave unnoticed. Staff are always alert to possible dangers and are quick to resolve potential issues as they arise. For example, by mopping up spills, preventing children from throwing sand or removing scissors from tables where there are no adults to supervise their safe use. Children use good quality, suitable and safe equipment which is well maintained and meets their individual needs. All items are checked regularly and any broken resources are replaced so that children can play safely. Appropriate procedures are in place to keep children safe on outings. Parents are asked to help so that a ratio of one adult to two children can be maintained and risk assessments are carried out in advance. If transport is required, minibuses with appropriate seat belts are always used. Children's safety is therefore given a high priority.

Children learn to keep themselves safe through practical experiences and discussions with staff during their daily routine. For example, staff carefully teach young children how to use the climbing frame safely and show them where to put their hands and feet when they are learning to climb to the top. Regular fire drills allow them to understand and practise what they are required to do in order to escape from the building quickly and staff reinforce the group's safety rules as they remind children that they must sit down when they are eating their lunch and must not run indoors.

Children are also safeguarded because staff clearly understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. Most staff have recently completed child protection training and understand the signs and symptoms which would give rise to concerns about a child's welfare. Appropriate procedures for reporting such concerns are in place and are made clear to parents in the child protection policy.

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

The provision is good.

Children quickly settle and become happy in the setting because staff are very supportive in meeting their individual emotional needs. New children have a carefully structured settling-in procedure and parents are encouraged to stay for as long as they are needed to help their child become comfortable. As a result, children enjoy taking part in the play and learning opportunities that are provided for them and are becoming confident to make decisions, explore and investigate in order to extend their learning. For example, they decide what activities they wish to take part in, explore the sand to see what they can make with the spades and moulds and investigate how to cut the playdough with plastic scissors. The opportunity for each child to take 'Wesley Bear' home for the night and to record what they have done together in his diary, encourages the links between home and pre-school and helps to develop children's confidence still further.

The youngest children are involved in a broad range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and learning. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to aid the planning of appropriate activities for the two-year-old children who attend the afternoon sessions and informally observe these children's achievements and progress. However, they do not as yet use their observations to effectively plan the next steps in the children's play, learning and development. Consequently, they are unable to monitor that all areas of their development and learning are being fully supported.

## NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children's independence is encouraged as they learn to put on their own coats, use the toilet and wash their hands with the minimum of help. They relate well to others and have many opportunities to play together both in small groups and in pairs during free choice play as well as in a large group during activities such as music and movement sessions. Snack times are used as social occasions during which children are encouraged to communicate freely with each other and with the staff, to talk about their families and home life and to learn to listen to others and to take turns when speaking. A newly introduced system of asking children to look for their name card at snack time and discussing what sound their name starts with, helps children begin to link sounds and letters and develops their phonic awareness and early reading skills. Children also have regular opportunities to enjoy mark making activities and to use crayons, pencils, paint brushes and scissors so that they can develop the dexterity and hand to eye coordination required for writing. They enjoy listening to stories in the cosy book corner and are developing vocabulary and language skills as they do so.

Children use numbers well, enjoy singing number rhymes and spontaneously count items as they play. Staff encourage this at all times and use practical opportunities, such as counting how many children need a biscuit at snack time and relating this to how many biscuits there are on the plate, to encourage them to begin to develop problem solving and calculation skills. Planned topics as well as spontaneous discussions with staff about size and shape help children to develop mathematical ideas and language.

Children are developing their understanding about the world around them by growing seeds, learning about hibernating animals and going for walks to collect natural materials, such as leaves and cones, which they can then use for creative activities, such as making a collage. They build and construct using a wide variety of resources and enjoy making large scale constructions, such as a scarecrow for the outside play area. Regular opportunities to use paint, dough, glue and crayons help children to begin to explore their creative skills in a variety of interesting ways and music and singing forms an important part of the daily routine as children join in with the 'tidy up' and 'goodbye' songs or enthusiastically sing action songs such as 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat'. They use their imaginations as they develop role play scenarios in the home corner and shop and during a movement session pretend to grow like the cress seeds they have just planted. Children's physical development is well supported. They learn to jump, climb, slide, kick, throw, catch and balance using the wide range of play equipment outside and to use a variety of tools such as cutters, rollers and glue spreaders with increasing control.

Staff work extremely well together as a team, have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and plan a curriculum which promotes children's progress towards the early learning goals. For example, the daily plans ensure that all areas of learning are covered and a more detailed activity plan for one key activity each day clearly shows what children are intended to learn, what resources will be needed and any adaptations or extensions to the activity that will be used to support individual children's learning needs. Staff carry out regular assessments and observations of children's progress and attainments and use these records to influence the planning of activities and to guide their teaching.

Staff use a variety of methods to help children learn effectively which take account of their age, level of development and some individual needs. For example, they help children to develop a sense of time by using a board of photographs showing the sequence of the daily routine to help them predict what will happen next and use opportunities, such as an unexpected snowy day, to provide meaningful learning experiences for children as they encourage them to dig, model and explore what they can do with the snow. However, staff sometimes miss spontaneous opportunities within the daily routine to provide sufficient challenge for older or more able children. As a result, these children are unable to fully extend their development and learning.

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

The provision is good.

Children are valued and included and feel a sense of belonging. As a result, they are settled and happy in the provision. They make choices and take decisions throughout their daily routine, such as deciding what they wish to play with or choosing what they want to drink at snack time and consequently, they are developing confidence and self-esteem. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by knowledgeable staff. Close liaison with their parents is maintained in order to monitor and record their progress and they are always fully consulted and involved in developing their child's individual education plan.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They learn to respond to appropriate expectations for their behaviour and are developing good social skills. Staff deal with inappropriate behaviour calmly and consistently and provide good role models for children. Politeness is valued and children are reminded to say 'thank you' if they forget to do so. Positive rules for behaviour, such as being kind to each other and listening when others are talking, are used to encourage children's understanding of what is required of them. With support, children are learning to share and take turns and to work harmoniously with others. For example, children help to tidy away the toys at snack time, take part in action songs and ring games in pairs and small groups and learn that they must share the lorries and sand smoothers in the sand tray. As a result, they are becoming aware of their own needs and are learning to respect the needs of others. Children also benefit from some activities and resources which help them value diversity. Because they are a church setting, the pre-school's main focus is on Christianity but children also learn about people from other countries and cultures as they look at and talk about items brought back from Africa by the manager. Access to resources such as books, puzzles, dressing up and dolls which also reflect cultural and racial differences, helps to extend children's understanding still further.

The partnership with parents and carers of nursery funded children is satisfactory. Staff form welcoming and friendly relationships with parents and share information about the children informally with them at the beginning or end of sessions. In addition, parents are encouraged to share their expertise with the group and so have some opportunities to become involved in their children's learning. For example, parents who are police officers visit to talk to the children about their job or parents with new babies bring them in to show the children how they bathe them.

Although parents are provided with information about the setting and its provision through the prospectus and newsletters, they do not receive sufficient information about either the Foundation Stage or the pre-school curriculum. As a result, they do not have a clear understanding of how the play activities provided by the setting help children make progress towards the early learning goals and are therefore unable to continue this play and learning at home. Also, although parents are informally told about children's achievements and progress they do not have regular opportunities to look at and share their children's written assessments and records. As a result they do not have opportunities to have an input into these records or to help identify any areas for improvement. Consequently, children's development and progress is not being fully supported and monitored.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Recruitment and vetting procedures contribute to children being protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development, a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. For example, all staff hold relevant childcare qualifications, regularly attend training to update and enhance their skills and are currently in the process of renewing the group's accreditation with the Herts Quality Standards quality assurance scheme. As a result, children's care and learning is supported by good practice. In addition, a questionnaire was recently sent out to parents seeking their views about the pre-school and its provision and this has contributed to the group's continuing development and improvement. All of the necessary documentation for the efficient and safe management of the provision is in place and record keeping systems are used to meet children's needs. The group's policies and procedures generally work well in practice to promote positive outcomes for children.

The careful use of time, space and staff deployment significantly contributes to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children and form an extremely effective, tight knit team who know and understand each other well. As a result, sessions run smoothly and are well organised. Staff clearly understand their role, know what is required of them and are vigilant at all times. Consequently, they react quickly to situations, such as a crying child or an argument over toys and provide appropriate support where and when it is needed. The pre-school room is organised to maximise the play opportunities for children, with clearly defined areas for messy play, table top activities and floor play created using low-level display boards. Resources and the toilets are easily accessible to enable children's independence.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The setting is well lead and the manager has a clear vision for nursery education with a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all children. Since moving to their new premises, the pre-school has been open for ten sessions a week and is therefore able to accommodate more children than at the previous setting. As a result, the manager and staff have reviewed their organisation and practice and have made an accurate assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. They are now working together to make any necessary changes and improvements. For example, induction procedures and staff appraisals are being further developed and policies are in the process of being updated and reviewed. Regular staff meetings enable all staff to have an input into planning and evaluating the nursery education. Their commitment is recognised and greatly valued by the manager and leads to a strong working relationship. The effective leadership of the setting successfully promotes a good nursery education for all children.

Overall, children's needs are met.

#### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

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

Since registration 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):

- review hand washing procedures at snack time
- increase the opportunities provided for children to learn about healthy eating



- ensure that the observations and records of the attainments and progress of children under three are used to plan the next steps for 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):

- ensure older or more able children are sufficiently challenged
- increase the opportunities for parents to share the records of their children's progress
- improve the information given to parents regarding the Foundation Stage and the pre-school curriculum.

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)