



Footsteps

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY257595
Inspection date	14 September 2005
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Registered person	Walford & North Shropshire 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Footsteps Day Nursery opened in 2003. It operates from five rooms within a purpose built centre, in the town of Oswestry. The setting serves the local area.

There are currently 90 children from birth to 11 years on roll. This includes 35 funded 3 and 4-year-olds. The setting supports children who have special needs or children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are between 08:00 and 18:00 and children can attend for a variety of sessions. The setting also offers a respite care facility in association with the SureStart local programme.

There are 18 staff who work directly with the children. In addition there are 2 domestic staff and 2 kitchen staff as well as the person-in-charge and the deputy who are both supernumery. All of the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3, the majority to level 3. The setting receives support from the Local Education Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have an extensive choice of healthy snacks and meals. Parents have the choice of providing their children with a packed lunch or utilising the hot meals facility available. Children enjoy a rotated menu of freshly prepared balanced meals, the details of which are displayed for parents to see so that they know what children are eating whilst they attend. There is a daily diary for younger children which is used to inform parents about the quantity and type of food consumed. Drinking water is available for children at all times, with the older children able to access water as they wish from a water machine located in their room.

Children develop an awareness of good hygiene procedures through routine activities such as hand washing and being encouraged to use tissues when they need them. Policies such as the 'no-shoe' policy in the baby rooms and extensive hygiene procedures throughout the nursery which are closely adhered to by staff ensure that children are cared for in an hygienic atmosphere. Good procedures are in place for ensuring that children's medication and accidents are recorded.

Children's physical development is promoted well. They have plenty of access to fresh air and outdoor activity which supports their overall physical development. Children have opportunities to climb, slide, run, walk, manoeuvre around and develop other skills such as hand and eye co-ordination. In addition, they are developing a sense of space and an awareness of themselves, with younger children being able to access the outdoor area at specific times away from the older children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy and benefit from a purpose built space which has low-level windows, thus creating a largely light and airy environment. The areas children use are bright, colourful, stimulating and interesting and they have access to an good range of resources and equipment which they access from mostly low-level storage.

The procedures in place for ensuring that the areas children use are clean and safe work in practice for much of the time. For example, staff carry out daily and weekly

checks on all rooms and equipment and resources are cleaned regularly. However, children's safety was compromised by a number of safety issues highlighted at this inspection. In the kindergarten room there was a socket uncovered and curtain cords were within children's reach. In the toddler changing area plastic aprons and bags were in a low-level drawer. In addition, in the baby room for older babies there were adult scissors and batteries in a drawer which could be reached by children.

Policies and procedures are in place which ensure that children's welfare is promoted effectively and that staff are aware of what to do if there is an accident, emergency or a child protection concern about any of the children. For example, detailed procedures are in place and staff receive training on an ongoing basis for first aid and child protection. There is an effective and secure entry system to the building and to all rooms to ensure that children are safe within the setting and so that staff can monitor access at all times.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a colourful, stimulating and interesting environment in which they are happy, content, secure and well cared for. Younger children enjoy age-appropriate activities within specific base rooms, although there are limited displays available at child-height so that children are not easily able to view their own work and respond to resources such as posters and pictures. All children are busily occupied with activities which include role play, dough, painting and sand play for toddlers and discovery and sensory play for babies. They enjoy good relationships with staff and other children and are developing their independence and confidence. They have good support and encouragement from caring and attentive staff who actively engage in their play and obviously enjoy being with them. Planning for this younger age group takes account of children's individual stages of development and is being improved on an ongoing basis, along with the assessment system, to incorporate the use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children are making sound progress towards the early learning goals.

Children aged 3 and 4 years utilise an appropriate range of resources and equipment which helps them to develop and extend their learning. They are sufficiently motivated to learn, interested in what is happening around them, excited to discover and investigate and some are confident in asking questions and exploring. They form good relationships with staff and other children, appear happy, content and secure in their environment and enjoy their time at the setting. Children are supported appropriately in their play by staff who engage appropriately with them, are good role models and who work hard to help children develop their play opportunities to extend their learning. Children aged 3 and 4 years benefit from a stable routine which accommodates a good balance of child-initiated play and reasonable structured activities. Children do not always have the opportunity to express themselves using

their imagination in these structured activities which are often very adult-led and sometimes unimaginative. Staff do not always carry through the activity in line with the intended learning focus highlighted in the plans. In addition, plans do not highlight differentiation, instead showing the same focus for all children. However, staff make sure that children have access to the resources that they need and want in their free play time. The planning and assessment system generally works in practice and allows children's progress to be tracked through the stepping stones, towards the early learning goals. Staff are currently reviewing how the outdoor space can be improved so that children can freely choose to play indoors or outdoors at any time.

The partnership with parents of funded 3 and 4-year-old children is effective. A relaxed, comfortable, happy and helpful ethos ensures that parents are able to discuss issues informally. Daily verbal feedback ensures that parents know about what their children have been doing whilst attending and activities are encouraged so that they can be involved in their child's learning, for example, parents evenings. However, the information given to parents about the foundation stage curriculum does not reflect current terminology in relation to the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children with specific needs are supported well. Close partnership with parents and other professionals as well as ongoing assessments help to ensure that children can develop at their own pace. Children are busy, occupied and keen and interested to learn, they motivate themselves and enjoy the wide range of activities which are accessed in free play or are provided by staff. Behaviour is good, with children developing good relationships with other children and staff, who use appropriate techniques to foster positive behaviour. Children are constantly praised and their efforts are acknowledged, for example, through discussion, photographs and displays of their work. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Overall the partnership with parents is good. There are appropriate procedures in place to ensure that children are cared for consistently and in accordance with their parents' wishes, for example, appropriate consents requested and detailed information obtained prior to the children starting at the setting. This consistency is further enhanced by daily verbal feedback and written feedback for younger children to ensure that parents are informed about what their children have been doing whilst attending. Children's understanding of diversity is promoted appropriately, for example, through themed activities, resources such as books, dolls and small world people, and posters. Children's individual needs are accommodated very well in a caring, gentle manner and supported within the daily routine of the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The management team has a clear

overview of the setting as a whole and have highlighted strengths and weaknesses within an action plan to improve. This helps to ensure that the care and education provided for the children is constantly under review, with an ethos of always being able to improve. Staff are supported with regular meetings, ongoing training and appraisals. This in turn helps to maintain a fairly steady staff group, thus helping to ensure consistent care for children. Staff work efficiently together as a team and there is a supportive management structure in place. The space children access has been purpose built, with the staff having some input into how the rooms were set out. This has meant that children have access to a largely light, airy and colourful space where they are obviously happy and comfortable.

There are some weaknesses in the procedures for ensuring that children are cared for by staff who have been suitably checked. The necessary procedure for ensuring staff have completed Ofsted suitability checks has been overlooked, in error, by the setting and some staff have not had these checks processed at all, though all staff have been checked through the Criminal Records Bureaux and go through the rigorous recruitment procedure employed by the registered body. However, all staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, with most qualified to level three in childcare and education.

Children's arrival and departure times are not consistently recorded in the register. In addition, the procedure for a lost child at the setting does not include a timescale, so it is unclear at what point the police and parents would be contacted if a child was lost. All other documentation is in good order and in line with requirements. Paperwork is stored securely within an office which can be locked, ensuring children's information remains confidential. Detailed policies and procedures are in place and are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they continue to work in practice. Overall the range of children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the provider was asked to address a number of issues in relation to the provision for nursery education. These issues related to the management of children's behaviour, organisation of staff time, use of resources and daily routines to extend children's learning, and opportunities for parents to be informed about their child's development. The routine of sessions has been re-organised so that children have much more time to extend their learning in child-initiated play, with free access to resources and appropriate support from staff to help them develop. This has impacted on the children's behaviour in that they are now busy and occupied. In addition, staff managed behaviour appropriately at the time of this inspection.

In relation to the care of the children, again the provider was asked to address a number of issues. These related to the safety of the children, for example, security of premises, uncovered electrical sockets and uncovered hot radiators. All of these issues were addressed soon after the inspection so that the areas used by children were safer. Finally, the setting were asked to keep proof of staff clearances on file within the nursery. Documentation for all staff employed at the nursery are kept on staff files within the college, as the college is the employer. Copies of clearances are

kept on file and were readily available for this inspection. The nursery is on the site of the college, which is the registered address.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- ensure that daily risk assessments are rigorous in ensuring that areas used by children are safe
- ensure that registers are consistently completed as the children arrive and clearly record the time of departure
- provide babies with interesting and stimulating displays at child height so that they can see their own creative work and other interesting media
- include a timescale in the setting lost child procedure so that it is more comprehensive
- review the procedures for ensuring that person's employed to care for children are suitable to do so

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):

- update the information available to parents about the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage so that it is current
- highlight differentiation in activity plans so that staff are aware of the specific aim of the session for younger children, less able or more able children and make sure that staff are reinforcing the appropriate aim and focus during the activity as well as being aware of what they can do to extend learning

- increase the opportunities for children to express their creativity in artwork and develop their understanding of language, literacy and number by encouraging imaginative use of the resources available and reducing the amount of adult-led artwork and reproduced worksheets.

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