



Learning Curve

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY251887
Inspection date	19 July 2005
Inspector	Rachel Edwards
Setting Address	Garabrecan, Brinkworth Road, Wootton Bassett, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN4 8DS
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Registered person	LC2 Ltd
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?

The Learning Curve Day Nursery opened in January 2004. It operates from two rooms, within purpose built premises on the outskirts of Wootton Bassett. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area and garden.

It is registered to care for no more than 36 children from birth to under five years at any one time. The group is open weekdays from 08.00 until 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. The nursery serves the local area. There are currently 45 children on roll,

including 10 who receive funding for nursery education. The group supports children with special needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs ten staff: seven of the staff, including the manager hold an appropriate early years qualification; two members of staff are currently working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a bright, clean and welcoming environment. Staff follow effective procedures to protect children from illness and infection. For example, in keeping the premises and equipment clean and when changing nappies. Children learn about the importance of personal hygiene as they wash their hands after the toilet and before eating and as they clean their teeth after meals. However staff miss some opportunities to teach children about hygiene, for example they do not always tell children why they need clean plates or cutlery after they have fallen on the floor.

Children enjoy a balanced nutritional diet, which includes fresh fruit and vegetables each day. Food is freshly prepared on the premises and the children enjoy talking to the chef about what they have particularly enjoyed or not liked so much. Children with special dietary needs are catered for. Children learn about healthy eating through themed activities and also by their enthusiastic involvement in growing and harvesting vegetables for the nursery kitchen. They are regularly offered drinks throughout the day.

Children develop a positive attitude to exercise, as they enjoy daily physical play. They love playing in the large outdoor area, where there is room to run and move in a variety of ways, such as rolling down the grassy banks or digging in the big sandpit. They routinely help in the nursery garden, planting beans, harvesting potatoes or watering the plants. They have regular walks to the nearby lake to look for flowers or feed the ducks. They also enjoy routine music and movement sessions, which encourage the children to move imaginatively and gain control of their bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Staff follow effective procedures as children arrive and depart to ensure they are only collected by agreed adults and that they cannot leave the premises unsupervised. However, children's departure times are not promptly recorded so that there is not always an accurate record of children in the building, which could endanger their welfare. Children can choose from a good range of high quality toys that meet safety standards and are appropriate to children's age and stage of development.

Children are well supervised at all times, including during outdoor play. They learn to

use a range of small and large equipment safely, such as pedalling around the path without bumping into others. Staff always accompany children in the smaller garden area but they are not aware that some plants growing there, such as foxgloves, are poisonous. Staff frequently take children for walks down to a large lake. They are highly vigilant in closely supervising the children, especially when near the water. They teach children about the importance of staying close but children do not benefit from clear explanations about the dangers of water and traffic.

Children are protected by staff who have a good understanding of child protection issues and would know what to do if they had concerns about the welfare of a child. Parents are informed of the nursery's responsibilities regarding child protection concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive happily at the nursery and are warmly greeted by the staff. They develop good relationships with each other and the staff and are able to play co-operatively with others or on their own. The children in the baby room make particularly good progress as staff recognise their individual needs and show the children a great deal of warmth and affection. For example, babies are held closely and stroked gently whilst bottle feeding. The baby room has a homely atmosphere with comfortable sofas and a soft area where children can rest. Planned activities for the younger children are good, based on guidance from the Birth to three matters framework. However there are few natural materials for babies to handle and explore.

Children from two to four-years share the larger playroom. For most of the session, the children are split into two groups, of those under and those over three-years. This allows staff to plan activities that are appropriate to each age group. It does however mean that for part of the day, children's choice of activities is restricted as they cannot access all the resources. At times this leads to some of the older children becoming bored and disruptive.

Throughout the nursery children enjoy regular singing, music and movement activities, which they enjoy and join in with enthusiastically. They love the extensive outdoor play area and children are always purposefully occupied during their time outside. The children benefit from planned outdoor activities which cover all areas of learning, such as pegging letters on an alphabet line. Opportunities are not regularly taken to take out smaller groups of children more frequently.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the foundation stage and the progress that children need to make towards the early learning goals. They have recently adopted a new system of planning that covers all areas of learning, providing a broadly balanced curriculum. Most children behave well and are considerate towards others. They are able to concentrate well if they are sufficiently interested in the activity. However, at times, the pace is too slow, children do not have enough choice or staff do not offer enough challenge to

maintain children's interest. For example, when children became bored with playing with cars, the activity was not changed nor was it extended. This resulted in children becoming disruptive and throwing toys.

Children count well and use numbers in their play. Staff use everyday routines to develop children's mathematical awareness, for example, they notice an orange slice is crescent shaped. The children wonder if their sunflowers are taller than they are and they eagerly stand by them to be measured. They have good practical opportunities for sorting, for example harvesting the red and white potatoes into different bags. Most children can recognise their names, for example, as they find their coat peg. They have opportunities to make marks, such as chalking on the floor outside, but older and more able children are not encouraged enough to develop their writing skills in meaningful activities such as writing lists or labelling their drawings. They have recently adopted a system of teaching phonic awareness and the children are making very good progress in hearing sounds and linking these to letters.

Children become aware of changes all around them, for example, as they watch plants and ducklings grow, talk about the weather and observe how ingredients change from when they are cooked. Children confidently use the computer to operate simple programmes that support other areas of learning. They explore the colour, shape and texture of different materials, for example, they are fascinated as they watch spilt paints slowly merge. However many art and craft activities are adult directed which limits children's creativity.

Children's progress in all areas of learning is monitored and regularly shared with parents. However this information is not effectively used to help staff plan activities that will appropriately challenge all children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are welcomed and fully included in the setting. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that children's individual needs are met, for example, in the baby room, home routines for sleeping and feeding are followed. Children are confident and begin to develop independence, for example in washing hands before meals but they are not encouraged to freely select from resources to play and develop their ideas independently. Staff lay tables and prepare and serve snacks, which means that children sit for too long and become bored.

Generally children behave well. Young children are well supported whilst learning to take turns and share and staff gently encourage them, for example, to sit at the table for meals. Older children respond well to praise and encouragement but staff do not always promptly correct unwanted behaviour so that children do not consistently learn acceptable boundaries for behaviour.

Children have a growing awareness of the wider world and how others live, through interesting activities such as visitors, food tasting and listening to stories and music from around the world. They are learning to care for the environment through

recycling activities, nature walks and nurturing flowers and vegetables in the garden. A group of three-year-olds express their concern over litter they find on a walk. This effectively fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents is good. Staff and parents have friendly and effective relationships, where information about the children is routinely shared so that children's individual needs can be met. Parents receive very good information about all aspects of the nursery and their child's progress through daily written reports, informal discussions, regular news letters and twice yearly parents evenings. The nursery is pro-active in seeking parents comments and a recently returned parental survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Suitably experienced and qualified staff support children's wellbeing and learning. The nursery owner and manager work closely with the staff to ensure that the clearly written policies and procedures are carried out in practice. This is reflected in the satisfactory and often good level of care. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The staff in the baby room work effectively as a team to help babies settle quickly and make good progress. In the older children's room, leadership is less clear so that activities, particularly for the older and more able, do not always offer sufficient interest or challenge.

The group is committed to providing high quality care and education and staff regularly attend relevant training to increase their knowledge. The management recognises its strengths and is aware of most areas for improvement. It is currently changing the system for planning activities and assessing children's progress but the full benefits of these changes are not yet evident.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following recommendations made at the last inspection, the staff now follow hygienic hand washing procedures before handling food, which protects children from the risk of infection. Parents now sign to acknowledge when the nursery has given medication to their child, which helps ensure the children's welfare. The nursery have improved children's safety by making sure that all electrical sockets within children's reach are covered and by keeping emergency fire exits clear at all times.

There is now a named deputy, who is undergoing training to help her take on the responsibility of her new role. This will ease some of the burden on the manager and ensure there is a suitable person to take over responsibility in the manager's absence.

To improve the nursery education, it was recommended that the staff develop the system used for monitoring children's progress and make greater use of this in

planning activities that provide sufficient challenge to all children. Staff have introduced a new system that effectively monitors children's progress. However, they have yet to use this information fully to ensure that all children, particularly the more able are sufficiently challenged.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received a concern on 30 March 2005 regarding the following: a high turnover of staff, unqualified staff, inadequate staff ratios, inadequate care given to babies, re-use of rubber changing gloves and not allowing some festivals to be celebrated. These concerns relate to the following National Standards: Standard 1 Suitable person, Standard 2 Organisation, Standard 3 Care, Learning and Play, Standard 7 Health and Standard 9 Equal opportunities.

Ofsted visited the nursery and were satisfied that it is meeting the National Standards. However, we made a recommendation under Standard 2 to "ensure that there is a named deputy who is able to take charge in the absence of the manager". During the visit, we identified that a fire exit was obstructed by furniture. We set an action under Standard 6 to "ensure that fire exits are not obstructed and are easily accessible at all times". The provider remains qualified for registration.

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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):

- Develop children's independence and involvement in the setting, for example, by encouraging them to select their own resources and to help with preparing, serving and clearing away snacks and meals.
- Ensure that children's departure time is promptly recorded.
- Ensure that staff have a consistent and positive approach to managing children's behaviour so that children have a clear understanding of the acceptable boundaries and know what is expected of them.

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 that activities provide sufficient challenge for older and more able children, including developing their writing skills.
- Ensure the organisation of craft activities allows the development of children's own sense of creativity and imagination.

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