

Little Gems Nursery & Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220277
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Inspector	Melanie Eastwell
Setting Address	Nene Park, Diamond Way, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire, NN9 5QF
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Registered person	Bright Horizons Family Solutions 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 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?

Little Gems Nursery is part of the Bright Horizons Family Solutions group. It opened in 2000 and operates from purpose-built premises on the site of Rushden and Diamonds football club in Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire. A maximum of 52 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00 all year round. All children have access to secure, enclosed outside play areas. There are currently 68 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 29 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. The nursery 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 nursery employs 13 members of staff. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow generally effective procedures to maintain a healthy environment. For example, they have access to antibacterial hand gel at various stations around the setting which is used to clean their hands as necessary. Children who have allergies are clearly identified on sheets displayed in each room which includes details of the allergy or dietary need and a photograph of the child. This ensures that all staff are aware of children who have specific health or dietary needs. Sleep mats are wiped when children wake up to ensure they are clean when they are stored ready for the next use. Staff wear gloves and aprons when changing nappies and wash their hands thoroughly. However, babies are not always protected from the risk of cross-infection because the changing mat is not cleaned thoroughly. Children who have accidents are managed effectively and sensitively because most staff hold current first aid certificates and well-stocked first aid kits are kept in accessible places on the premises. Children are learning about the benefits of effective personal hygiene because they wash their hands. Staff talk to them about germs and visual displays are available to children in the bathroom which promote simple procedures.

Children enjoy freshly prepared, varied and nutritious meals and snacks. Weekly menus are displayed to inform parents what food is provided. Babies' meals are pureed or mashed by the staff for their individual requirements and parents bring in prepared bottles or water and measured amounts of formula milk which are stored appropriately and are clearly labelled. A detailed procedure is in place for the preparation and heating of bottle feeds which is understood by the staff. Babies are fed according to their individual needs and parental wishes, staff sit comfortably and always hold babies who have bottle feeds. Older children sit together to eat, and are allowed to eat at their own pace. Staff supervise them and talk to them about the food, referring to the names of vegetables and about healthy choices. This promotes children's awareness of the food they eat and how to make healthy selections. Children are supported by staff to serve themselves which helps them to make decisions about how much food they want. Children do not become thirsty because they have individual water bottles available in each room which they can access at any time during the session. Water is also provided in open cups at lunchtime.

Children have plenty of opportunities to practise their physical skills. Babies and toddlers are cared for in a spacious room which has areas where it is safe for them to crawl around and explore their environment. The staff provide them with play materials that encourage them to climb over and through. Babies also enjoy the treasure baskets and explore a variety of textures and sounds. They have opportunities to play outside in the fresh air and use appropriate toys such as rockers and small ride on toys. Older children enjoy physical activity in the outside area where they demonstrate their skills in using the pedals and steering bikes to successfully negotiate space. They go for regular walks around the local area and share the outside play space with the younger children. Children are learning new skills. For example, they use a ride on toy called 'Swing-go' which involves keeping the motion going to propel themselves forward. Children try various ways before perfecting the technique and skilfully move around the garden. They begin to develop health and bodily awareness. For example, they say they feel cold when they come inside, the staff suggest they rub their hands together and the children say their hands are warming up when they do rub them together. Children know where their water bottles are and access them as they wish. Children's fine skills are also promoted through the use of

equipment including scissors, playdough tools and manipulating puzzle pieces and construction toys.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is given high priority by the staff who are vigilant in following procedures to maintain a safe environment. The premises are secure. All parents and visitors use an entry system and are greeted by the manager or a member of staff. Visitors sign in and out and identification documents are checked. Staff are prompt in cleaning up after messy activities and children are protected from trapped fingers because store cupboards have high handles and external doors have systems to prevent accidents happening. Children have access to a wide range of good quality equipment and play materials which are safe, suitable and cover all areas of development. Babies benefit from the variety of equipment in place to promote their development such as low-level chairs and baby nests.

Children begin to learn how to protect themselves. For example, they follow emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis at different times of the day. Babies can be evacuated safely because a number of evacuation cots are in place and bags containing supplies of changing equipment and blankets are taken out during any evacuation. Each member of staff has a specific task to complete, such as taking the attendance register and any required medication which ensures that the procedure runs smoothly. Staff have a good understanding of risk. Older children are reminded why it is important not to throw sand, babies are closely supervised during meal times and sleeping babies are checked every 10 minutes. Staff set a digital timer to ensure that these checks are made on time. This contributes to children's safety. Children's welfare is safeguarded because the manager has completed further training in this area and is confident that all staff fully understand the procedures to follow in the event of child protection concerns such as recording and reporting issues according to the company policy and the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines. All staff understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality when managing such issues.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy attending the setting and quickly settle to their chosen activities. They benefit from being able to make decisions about their play and choose freely from the wide and interesting range of activities set out by the staff. Children are confident to approach the staff for comfort and reassurance. They demonstrate good relationships with the staff. For example, a toddler looks for a preferred member of staff when they wake up and put their arms up for a cuddle which is willingly given by the member of staff who approaches with a smile and reassuring words. Younger children enjoy the highly positive interaction from the staff, they engage them in conversation and join in with games. For example, a selection of hats is provided, some toddlers pull them on and look in the mirror and laugh. A member of staff joins in and puts a hat on themselves which makes the child laugh and pull the hat off to swap with their own. Babies thrive because the staff are very demonstrative with them. A baby is completely engaged with laughter by the member of staff who smiles and pulls faces with them. This is clearly demonstrated when the staff member is distracted and loses eye contact, the baby immediately stops laughing. When the staff member turns back to them they are engaged again straight away. Children's confidence and self-esteem is promoted. Children aged two years, show fascination and wonder when a large beetle is found in the garden. They crowd around

it and watch how it moves. The staff talk to them about how many legs they can see and the shiny black colour. Some children show confidence to test the beetle's pincers by touching it with a twig and watch it grip the twig tightly. Children show curiosity and are able to explore through a variety of well-planned activities that are suitable for their ages. They are able to be creative and their work is displayed around the room which develops a sense of belonging and value. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to efficiently plan and provide an interesting and appropriately challenging range of activities for younger children. Each child has a file containing written observations, photographs and samples of their work which show their progression.

Nursery Education

Children are interested and motivated to learn because they are provided with a good range of activities that encourage exploration and curiosity and they benefit because the staff position themselves with activities to promote language and discussion. Children are encouraged to try new experiences with the support from staff. They freely approach the staff to seek reassurance or to ask for items they want and enjoy the staff's involvement, therefore gravitating towards the activities supervised by the staff. Children are developing close relationships with their peers. They play complicated games together including imaginative and role play activities and have lengthy conversations during art and craft activities. A small group of children work together on a structure with the large wooden blocks. They negotiate with each other to try out different methods before deciding on the best way to proceed. They understand that a more effective result can be achieved when they work co-operatively. Children's independence is effectively promoted. They are able to hang up their own coats and put them on to go outside. The cutlery is passed around and children help themselves at lunchtime, they are supported by staff to serve themselves to their meal and take their own plates away when they have finished. Children are confident speakers. They freely ask questions and express their feelings. They enjoy listening to stories both in large and small groups, and individually. Some children listen to stories on compact disc through headphones as a small group and are able to recall familiar or their favourite parts of the story. A popular activity is story telling using a group of children who wear masks to take on roles such as 'The three little pigs', all the children join in enthusiastically with the story. Children begin to recognise their names because they have labels on their coat pegs and on their lunch mats. They enjoy practising writing and attempt to copy their names from cards. Most are able to form the letters correctly and proudly show their achievement.

Children have plenty of opportunities to develop their awareness of numbers. Staff introduce counting into a variety of activities and there are displays of numbers around the setting. Children work with small cubes and are supported by staff to become aware of subtraction and calculating. For example, staff ask questions such as 'I have two and you have two, how many have we got all together?' and 'We have four, now if I take one away how many are left?'. During water and sand play children learn about measure and capacity because they fill and empty containers of different shapes and sizes. They use words such as 'full up' and 'overflowing'. Children's knowledge of the world around them is developing because they have lots of experiences which promote their exploration and curiosity. For example, they go for a walk to look at patterns. Children find patterns on walls, trees and fences, they take photographs and rubbings which are used to make a display in the nursery. Children create pictures using wax candles and thin paint to see the result. Children are involved in growing activities where they plant seeds and watch them grow. Through discussion with staff they learn about how to care for the plants and the need for water and light. They enjoy growing runner beans and the staff extend the activity by introducing the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Children use the

computer independently after a demonstration from the staff, are able to successfully navigate around the programmes and create pictures which they print off. The wooden blocks are a favourite with the children who work collaboratively to create various structures. Sometimes they play independently and sometimes supported by staff who ask them what they are going to make. Children talk about the house they intend to build and how many windows and other features they are planning. Children's creativity is promoted through a wide variety of activities. They are able to make pictures using paint and various pens and pencils. They are able to choose materials from the mark-making area, such as hole punches, sticky tape and scissors. They make models from junk which are brightly painted before being taken home. Children enjoy listening to various styles of music and story compact discs which develops their listening skills.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The Bright Horizons Family Solutions company has its own system to plan activities for children which closely links to the Foundation Stage. The staff work on the planning two weeks ahead and record ongoing observations of children which are used directly to inform the forthcoming activities. For example, a child shows an interest in and asks questions about fire engines and the emergency services. Staff take note of this and prepare a large group activity where they discuss the emergency services and talk about making '999' calls. Some children recall their own experiences and talk freely to the large group. The staff thoroughly prepare by gathering pretend mobile telephones and relevant dressing-up clothes to prompt the children to role play scenarios that they recall or invent. This direct use of children's interest makes the learning and discussion meaningful and fresh to the children, who embrace this large activity because of the skilled involvement from the staff. The observations are recorded on pre-printed sheets which have space for them to detail the purpose of the activity and the child's next steps, which ensures that forward progression is identified for all children. These are transferred into children's individual files every three months. The spontaneous activities are recorded onto the weekly planning sheets. Systems are in place for the key workers to identify how many observations have been recorded for each child to ensure a balance across the group and that meaningful activities are provided for each child. The planning and assessment procedures work very well. They take account of individual children and allow for their particular interests to be incorporated into the planning, which contributes to a sense of belonging and value for all children. Children benefit from the staff's clear knowledge and understanding of child development and relish their involvement through asking questions and showing an interest in what they are doing during their activities. The staff are skilled at knowing when to become directly involved and when to leave children to work without adult involvement.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are treated as individuals and with respect. They are encouraged to choose freely from the wide range of activities and have access to a good selection of play materials and resources that celebrate diversity. Children are learning about the wider world because they take part in various festivals throughout the year. Children benefit because the staff know them well and understand their individuality. For example, a child who is unwilling to come and sit down at lunchtime is allowed to continue to sit and look at books. A member of staff tells them that a meal is waiting for them when they are ready and the child soon comes to the table and eats with the other children. All children are welcomed into the setting and thorough discussion with parents and close liaison with other agencies ensures that any specific needs can be met effectively. The nursery puts individual measures in place to support children who have learning difficulties or disabilities, such as funded one-to-one care. This enables children to have a

successful placement in the setting. Children behave well because they are provided with a stimulating range of activities and play materials that are appropriately challenging for their age and stage of development. Staff support children in their activities which helps to minimise behaviour issues arising. Children understand the boundaries that are in place for safety and respond to the staff's reminders to be careful and to think of others. Older children begin to be aware of their actions and words on others. They are encouraged to explain to each other how they feel about different issues and they show care and concern for each other. For example, children show their friends where to find items in the room and demonstrate how to dress the doll by moving it's arms back. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from the positive relationship between their parents and the nursery staff. Parents are welcomed into the setting and take their children into their own room. Staff make themselves available to talk to parents when they arrive and greet them and their children warmly. Parents have access to various notice boards around the setting that give information on the nursery and company ethos, forthcoming events, planning of activities, the 'Birth to three matters' framework and general child health. A system is in place to record any complaints arising from parents relating to the National Standards. Regular newsletters are produced. The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. They have access to the company's 'World At Their Fingertips' educational programme and the curriculum planning which is displayed in the pre-school room. Parents are informed about the purpose of activities through attractive displays showing photographs of children with captions explaining the learning opportunities from the different activities. The staff invite parents to an open evening where they can see a sample of the range of activities their child will participate in and they are invited to ask any questions. When children start attending, parents are asked for information about their achievements at home to help the key worker to identify their initial starting points. Parents are provided with a wealth of written information and ideas to become involved with their child's learning and to extend learning at home. The involvement with home is extended through a toy called 'Travelling Ted' who has a suitcase and often goes home or on holiday with children. Parents are encouraged to be involved through taking photographs and keeping a diary of the bears activity with the child's family. This toy is helpful in helping children settle back in to nursery when they return from family holidays. Parents conferences are held twice each year when parents are invited for an individual meeting with their child's key worker and to look at their progression through the written observations, photographs and art work. Whilst the setting has built a very successful partnership with parents and carers they have identified that this is an area for further development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care, welfare and learning is promoted in this welcoming and well-organised setting. The manager ensures that staff feel supported and this is achieved by the manager spending a significant amount of time in the nursery rooms with the children. All the required documentation is in place and is kept up to date. The Bright Horizons Family Solutions company has its own documentation system that effectively meets the requirements of the National Standards. The written policies and procedures are clearly reflected in the staff's daily activity with children. Children benefit from the effective use of the available space. The outdoor play policy has recently been amended to ensure that the pre school children and the two year olds do not use the outside play space at the same time. This ensures that children are safe and can play productively. The nursery is committed to keeping it's knowledge up to date and is keen

to be involved in schemes organised through the local authority to improve outcomes for children such as 'The Baby Room Project'. Two members of staff are involved in this project and find this extremely helpful in their daily activity in the baby room.

Leadership and management of funded children is good. The manager has a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the Bright Horizons Family Solutions company curriculum, 'World At Their Fingertips'. She supports staff to implement these documents to enhance children's learning experiences. Staff receive good support which develops their confidence to use the systems in place to record children's achievements effectively and to extend their learning. Staff and planning meetings are held regularly which ensures that activities for children are meaningful and relevant to their interests. The nursery regularly reviews and evaluates its own practice and constantly looks for ways to enhance the children's experiences and development. Robust systems are in place to ensure that suitable staff are employed and the staff benefit from the appraisal system which identifies and celebrates areas of strength and any training requirements. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure that children have a range of activities and resources that promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Children enjoy using a good range of play materials and resources that promote diversity and a wider view of the world including puzzles, dolls, posters, books, displays and dressing-up clothes. Regarding nursery education, the provider agreed to develop the observation and assessment procedures to ensure they inform the planning. Each child has detailed observations recorded and individual assessments are completed to ensure the planning is directly linked to all children's interests and next steps for learning. The action taken has a positive impact on children's learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 01 April 2004, Ofsted received one complaint relating to National Standard 2 - Organisation and National Standard 6 - Safety. This involved a serious accident occurring in the outside play area. An unannounced visit took place and one action was set under National Standard 2 - Organisation to demonstrate appropriate staff deployment and adult to child ratios during outside play to maintain the safety of children. The provider took appropriate action by amending the risk assessment, reviewing and expanding the company outdoor policy, making regular checks on ratios and reminding staff to communicate issues relating to ratios, reducing the number of children using the outside play space at any one time and providing a first aid kit in the garden. This complaint is recorded in the nursery complaint record. Ofsted was satisfied that by taking these steps the provider met the National Standards and remained qualified for registration at the time the investigation was closed.

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):

- ensure that consistent practices are followed to ensure effective hygiene in the changing areas.

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):

- continue to enhance the partnership with parents and carers.

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