

The Garden Cottage Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY271444
Inspection date	10 May 2007
Inspector	Anita Bartram

Setting Address	Church Road, Boreham, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 3EB
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Registered person	Deborah Anne Law
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Sessional care
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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?

Garden Cottage Nursery opened under the current owner in 2003. It operates from a purpose-built building situated in the centre of Boreham, Essex. A maximum of 16 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09.15 to 12.00 and 12.30 until 15.00, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 40 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 25 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from both the local and wider area. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities. No children currently attend who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven staff. Three of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are able to begin to develop healthy tastes in what they eat and drink through the very valuable opportunities staff offer. For example, milk or water is offered at snack time and children eagerly eat the fruit salad they prepared earlier in the session. Staff actively encourage children to try new tastes, for example, when they hesitate over unfamiliar fruits in the fruit salad or as part of cultural celebrations where children can try rice, noodles or couscous. As a result, children have a good awareness about what food and drink is good for them.

Children are generally aware of why they must wash their hands before eating and follow sound basic routines instigated by staff. The premises are clean and staff have sound procedures in place to exclude sick children. All the staff, with the exception of one, have a first aid certificate and posters are placed around the nursery to remind staff of life-saving procedures in an emergency. A medication policy is in place which is generally implemented appropriately by staff. As a result, children's health is suitably protected and cross infection is minimised.

All children, but particularly those who are younger or less confident, are supported warmly by staff. As a result, children are able to develop their emotional stability and resilience. Children enjoy the routine opportunities to play outside. Many children skilfully negotiate their trikes or scooters around the outdoor play area, stopping and starting appropriately when staff operate the traffic lights or weaving in and around others. Children move around indoors competently and can organise themselves in space to sit on the carpet or line up behind each other. Children's finer physical skills are developing well. Many can adjust puzzles pieces appropriately or bang, fix or wind with their tools to fix things during role-play activities. Consequently, children's physical skills are developing well.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are able to play safely indoors and out. Staff carry out comprehensive risk assessments and, as a result, all hazards to children are minimised. All toys and equipment are in good condition and suitable for their use. Staff create a welcoming atmosphere in the group as children arrive by speaking warmly to them and chatting informally to parents. Bright displays of children's work provides children with a stimulating environment in which to play and learn.

The premises are generally secure. Staff keep the main exit gate locked at all times and vigilantly monitor children as they arrive and leave. This ensures no children can leave the premises unsupervised. Staff supervise the children whilst they are playing in the garden. However, the fencing around the outdoor play area is not yet sufficient to completely eliminate all potential risk of children leaving the premises alone or an intruder coming onto the premises.

All staff have attended training in child protection and as a result, have a thorough appreciation of their roles and responsibilities. Senior staff are aware of local safeguarding procedures and are confident to discuss issues with parents or to refer their concerns to appropriate investigating bodies. Consequently, measures to safeguard children are very firmly in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The atmosphere in the group is warm and homely, yet purposeful in offering a sound curriculum for the children's learning. For example, children happily arrive in the nursery and are greeted by friendly staff. Children are quick to settle at activities prepared by the staff before the nursery opens. Consequently, children have their care, learning and play needs securely met and children enjoy their time at the nursery.

Staff are knowledgeable and skilled at implementing the 'Birth to three matters' framework. For example, planning is structured around the key elements of two year olds' development, and as a result, younger children's development and learning is encouraged in all areas. Staff are very skilled at adapting their interaction with the children according to their age or stage of development and this has a very positive impact on the children's enjoyment and achievement. For example, staff appreciate that younger children are not yet able to sit still for long, or listen quietly within large groups, and so adapt their expectations of younger children's behaviour. Staff model two year olds' words and sentences back to them and this actively encourages their emerging language skills.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is having a particularly noticeable effect on children's very good progress in communication, language and literacy. Staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage is generally good. Staff make effective use of their good knowledge of child development to implement the Foundation Stage. Senior staff have a more robust knowledge of the early learning goals and plan a fun and stimulating range of activities to help children learn. For example, children thoroughly enjoy chopping up and mixing fruit to make a fruit salad. They discover new tastes as they try unfamiliar fruits, asking staff what it is on their spoon and what it is called. Staff make effective use of assessment and key staff know their children very well. Consequently, staff are able to quickly identify and take action regarding any concerns about a child's progress.

Senior staff have developed effective curriculum planning and as a result, the curriculum offered to children is broad and covers all six areas of their development. Opportunities for older or more able children to extend their skills are sometimes missed by staff. For example, during creative activities, some staff do not always allow children to create for themselves, using their own ideas and interpretations. Staff use formal activities to teach children letters and numbers and use an approach used by the local primary school. This is valuable in aiding children's transition into school. However, there are limited opportunities for children to use numbers and writing for themselves during purposeful play. This has a restricting effect on children's emerging appreciation of how and why numbers and letters are used.

Staff management of children and their behaviour is very good. Staff are consistent and use many positive strategies to encourage good behaviour or to help children appreciate right from wrong. There is a good balance between free-play time and more structured sitting down time for the children. Children are generally able to use the outdoor area each day. However, staff are not yet making full use of the outdoor play area to offer all areas of the Foundation Stage to children on a more free-flow basis. This hampers the breadth and pace at which some children are able to experience, consolidate and extend their learning best suited to their learning style.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Children are confident in their play and enjoy some opportunities to be independent, for example, pouring their own drinks or using the bathroom by themselves. Older children are very confident to speak or suggest ideas in group time and all children are developing worthwhile skills in listening. Older children's behaviour is very good. Many children successfully negotiate over turn taking, for example, who is going to wear the shiny shoes from the dressing up trolley next or who is going to paint at the easel next. Children's communication, language and literacy skills are very good. All children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories from staff. Some older or more able children's language skills are exceptional. For example, they use rhyming words to replace original words in familiar rhymes such as Incy Wincy Spider. They delight in hearing the words rhyme or when others laugh at the nonsense of it all. Through formal writing activities children are generally beginning to form familiar letters correctly. However, children have only limited opportunities to use mark making or writing for purpose, such as attempting to write their own name on their work before staff do, or making lists or messages.

Children's mathematical development is secure. Many children are able to count purposefully towards 10. Children are becoming aware of shape and many can recognise familiar ones. Children make good use of words such as big and small during everyday conversation and are becoming skilled at completing puzzles appropriate for their age. Children have limited opportunities to use spoken or written number for purpose. For example, staff miss everyday opportunities such as registration, snack time or lining up to engage children in counting, simple calculating or recording how many. As a result, children are not actively able to see why and how numbers are used. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is generally good. Older children have a good sense of time, referring to what they did last week and many children can describe features of their more immediate environment, such as the weather or where they live. Children enjoy building towers and walls with man-made bricks although the provision for them to design and make in more creative activities is sometimes limited. Children enjoy using the computer and concentrate hard as they manoeuvre the mouse around different programs.

Children's creative development is progressing well. Older children are becoming skilled at expressing themselves through singing and imaginative activities such as role-play. For example, children use play tools to mend and build, or clip clop around the nursery in shiny shoes pretending to be adults. Children have a sound awareness of colour. Opportunities for children to create using their own ideas and interpretations are sometimes limited due to staff eagerness to ensure pictures or crafts children make look as an adult expects them to look.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff offer very good support for children attending who may have more specific learning or physical needs. Staff liaise closely with parents and other professionals involved in the child's care to ensure they are doing everything they can to meet the child's particular needs. Consequently, all children are able to participate fully in all activities. There is a valuable supply of resources for children to play with, and posters and books for children to see, that promote images of diversity. Staff encourage children to try different tastes from around the world as part of special activities during celebration times or during snack. As a result, all children are able to build a balanced and positive view of the differences and similarities between themselves and others.

Staff have strong working relationships with parents, enabling all children's care needs to be met. Staff keep parents very informed about who to contact with any concerns and regularly

ask for comments from parents through questionnaires. As a result, parents are included and valued in the life of the group, thus encouraging good consistency of care for the children. Staff manage children's behaviour consistently and with a positive variety of strategies. For example, some children have visual charts to help them earn rewards for positive behaviour and many delight in receiving stickers for trying new things such as being brave enough to sing in front of others. Staff offer lots of praise to children as they wait patiently for their turn at the easel. As a consequence, all children are able to begin to learn about how to behave responsibly and what is right from wrong.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents of funded children are encouraged to be involved in the education of their child through mostly informal methods. For example, children are encouraged to bring things in from home beginning with the letter of the week. Staff readily chat over any developmental concerns with parents at the end of sessions. Although parents are able to ask to see their child's developmental records, these are not always readily accessible to them to enable them to continuously share what they know about their child's progress and achievements.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The established staff team and its organisation have a positive impact on the atmosphere in which children can play and learn. Staff are clear in their roles and responsibilities and the registered provider monitors the effective organisation of the setting through regular staff meetings or by working alongside staff in the nursery. The adult:child ratio fully supports children's care, learning and play.

All the required documentation is in place and is kept securely and confidentially. Comprehensive policies and procedures have been developed by the registered provider who regularly reviews these. This enables her to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the setting. For example, entries into the accident and incident records are reviewed at staff meetings to evaluate the need for any further action to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Sound vetting procedures ensure children are well protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development.

The leadership and management of the nursery is good. The staff team is strong and experienced and is effectively led and managed by the registered provider. Good systems are in place to monitor the range of the Foundation Stage curriculum offered to the children. Senior staff have completed general training at level 3, although are yet to complete specific training in the Foundation Stage. This has some effect on the degree to which all staff challenge or extend children. For example, in how they use the outdoor play space, the opportunities children have to use mark making and number in play, and how much staff enable children to use their own experiences and ideas in creative activities. However, all staff show good commitment to the ongoing continuous improvement of the nursery's provision.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Care

At the last inspection, the provider agreed to review and update the child protection policy and identify and access relevant training. She agreed to review the security of the outside play area. All staff have now attended child protection training and the policy has been reviewed to reflect the increase in staff knowledge. As a result, measures to safeguard children are securely in place to protect children from non-accidental harm. The main exit gate to the nursery is now very secure. However, further measures are needed to ensure the fencing around the outdoor area keeps children secure.

Nursery Education

At the last inspection, the provider agreed to continue to develop the use of assessment to inform future planning and provide appropriate challenge and introduce a more rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching. Assessment of the children's achievements is very thorough and planning now identifies ways to challenge or extend more able children. However, some staff do not always make full use of opportunities to do this whilst children play. The system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching is sound and the registered provider has a generally good appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. As a result, sound improvement has been made in the quality of teaching children receive.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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):

- ensure fencing around the provision is sufficient to ensure children's security and safety
- provide opportunities for all parents to readily access and contribute to their individual children's development records.

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):

- develop the opportunities staff use to challenge older and more able children whilst they complete activities or play freely, to include everyday opportunities for them to mark make and use number purposefully
- increase all staff skills in delivering the Foundation Stage to enable them to develop the children's use of the outdoor play space as a learning environment all year round.

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