

# Little Hands Preschool Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	203764
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 May 2007
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<b>Setting Address</b>	Dengie Community Hall, Dengie Close, Witham, Essex, CM8 1DJ
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<b>Registered person</b>	Little Hands Pre-School Nursery
<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?

Little Hands Pre-School Nursery is privately owned. It opened in 1994 and operates from rooms within a community hall in the outskirts of Witham, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school nursery at any one time. The pre-school nursery is open each weekday from 09:15 to 14:45 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 69 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 50 children receive funding for early education. Children attend from the local and wider community. The setting supports a large number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school nursery employs 11 members of staff. Of these, nine staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a clean and hygienic environment where staff follow appropriate health and hygiene procedures to reduce the risk of cross-infection. All the required documentation to promote the children's good health is in place, such as the recording of allergies and medical conditions. Appropriate measures are taken when children become ill at nursery and there is a sickness exclusion policy to ensure that all children are protected from infection.

Children learn about their own personal care and hygiene through well-planned topics and everyday practical experiences. They are aware that they need to wash their hands after using the toilet and before having a snack to stop germs spreading. There is potential for cross-infection when a communal bowl and hand towel are used after messy play.

Children benefit from healthy drinks of milk or water and are offered biscuits to eat. Parents are given the choice of providing their child with alternative snacks and the group promote a healthy eating policy for packed lunches. Healthier snacks are not yet readily available. Children are able to ask for a drink of water throughout the session but are not able to access this for themselves, promoting independence. The children are encouraged to try different foods. For example, at a food tasting exercise children record their preferences, building a picture of what food they most and least like.

Children's physical development is good. They balance on the indoor balancing beams and jump from hoop to hoop pretending to be frogs, and finishing off the circuit by completing a head over heels on an exercise mat. Outside there are sit and ride toys, cars, scooters, a small slide and racing exercises. They notice the effects exercise has on their bodies. For example, that it makes them need a drink of water. Children are learning that exercise is fun which promotes a positive attitude to exercise.

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

The provision is good.

Children are warmly greeted when they arrive and quickly settle to their play. The environment is made attractive by the numerous pictures, posters and displays put out each day by the staff. Space is used well with partitioned areas for different types of play which enables children to engage in a wide range of activities. For example, the home area and book corner allows children to choose more physical play while others sit uninterrupted working at table top and floor play. Cosy cushions in the book area provide comfortable areas where children can rest and play quietly.

Children are able to play freely without risk of harm because effective risk assessments are in place and potential hazards are minimised. Staff monitor the security of the premises effectively to ensure children are not able to leave unescorted and unauthorised persons do not have access to the children. Children use a wide range of well-maintained toys and resources, and furniture and equipment is in good order. Overall, the range of resources and play materials are good.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe effectively. For example, they learn where it is and is not appropriate to run. Children regularly practise fire drills which are well planned and implemented. Children talk about other safety issues such as stranger danger and enjoy visits

from the police and fire services. During cooking activities and imaginative play children talk about safety in the home such as avoiding hot dishes and not using sharp knives. As a result, children have a wealth of opportunities to learn about safety.

Staff regularly discuss and update their knowledge regarding child protection issues and there is a comprehensive policy in place. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding the children they care for. Consequently, children are fully protected from non-accidental harm.

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

The provision is good.

Children have a very busy and happy time at the pre-school nursery and their all round development is promoted well through the good range of well-planned activities and experiences. The younger children benefit from the staff's confident understanding and delivery of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff make constructive observations of what the children already know and can do and use this information to plan activities to enable the children to take their next steps. Staff know the children well and there are good, trusting relationships between them.

Children's confidence is promoted as they work alongside caring and supportive staff. They concentrate well on activities because they are varied and interesting. For example, children's growing independence is supported, as they learn to dress and undress as they participate in physical exercise sessions. The effective use of the home corner further promotes children's independence and decision making skills. For example, they access and use the play food to make delicious meals with mushrooms, peppers, courgettes and cucumber.

The younger children's developing language skills are extended through purposeful interaction with staff. Children discover the meaning of new words when staff introduce them to a wider vocabulary in everyday situations. All children enjoy singing rhymes, participating in action rhymes and listening to stories which further promotes their language development. Children's early mathematical skills are developed as they sort, order and classify their play materials.

Children have very good opportunities to develop their natural curiosity through an excellent range of experiences inside. For example, they investigate shaving foam with their hands and make different shapes. Children enjoy tree rubbing and nature walks on local outings.

Staff effectively organise the children's use of the garden area for themselves and the children have planted runner beans, strawberries and sunflowers. The children do not consistently have free access to the outside play area which means they do not always have opportunities to further develop their leaning and freedom of choice in activities on a larger scale.

Children enjoy their imaginative play and devise their own games and scenarios as they play in the home corner and with the small world equipment. A small group of children huddle around the dolls house, putting the dolls in different rooms in the houses and creating stories about what the dolls are doing. Children prepare and cook meals in the home area.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Most staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage. Some staff are still developing their knowledge with effective support of more experienced staff and

through external training. The written planning systems provide good support for all staff so that they are clear what learning intentions can be derived from the adult planned activities and how these can be adapted to individual children's needs.

Children are taught in a variety of ways such as large and small group work and one to one teaching. Key persons have a detailed knowledge of the children in their groups but all staff are able to respond effectively to all children. Staff support children well in planned and child-led activities to further promote the children's understanding. The level of constructive communication is very good and staff use good, open ended questions to make children think and to work out things themselves. Staff are interested in what the children say and do and they use positive methods to promote the children's good behaviour.

The indoor learning environment is organised well with varied and well-planned, prepared and presented activities which promote the children's learning, decision making and independence skills. The outdoor play area is used regularly and staff use spontaneous opportunities to extend the children's learning when outside. However, the outdoor area is not always planned as an integral part of the provision, where children can play and learn readily outside in a more open and less restricting environment.

Staff make regular observations of the children at play and these contribute to their good record of progress. These records are kept consistently to provide a clear picture of what the child is able to do in each area of their learning. Effective short term planning ensures the planned activities and experiences are relevant to the children's current level of understanding. Good planning systems are in place and staff organise a broad range of activities and experiences which cover all six areas of learning.

Children enjoy what they do and sustain interest in a range of activities, which promote their understanding and learning. Children are motivated and concentrate well. Children are confident speakers and express their ideas and views clearly. More able children easily recognise the sounds of letters and can name them. Children learn to recognise their names as they put their belongings on their name cards at the beginning of the sessions and write their own names or make their own marks on their creations. Some of the more able children are beginning to form letters correctly and write their own, family names and names of friends. Children enjoy sitting in small groups either with staff or by themselves looking at books. Children take an active part in story telling as they join in with the 'Three Bears' story. Children learn about the rhythm of words as they participate in singing and action rhymes, and listen to music during the session.

Children are developing a good understanding of mathematical ideas and concepts. They recognise numbers and count in their everyday play. Children begin to recognise and name numerals as they talk about them and draw around them to help them feel the shape and how it is formed. Children explore capacity and quantity as they play in the sand and water trays, filling different sized containers and working out if they are full or empty. They compare size and different shapes when they work on topics. Children learn about simple addition and subtraction as they calculate how many more plates are needed at snack time and sing number rhymes such as 'Ba Ba Black Sheep'.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first-hand experiences. For example, they go on nature walks to develop their sense of the local community. They learn about time when they discuss the weather and talk about the days of the week and the changing seasons of the year. Children share their news from home, telling their friends and staff about their experiences and special events.

Children have good opportunities to use tools and simple equipment to increase their fine motor skills through the range of everyday activities they take part in. For example, cutting and rolling when playing with play dough. Children are developing a sound understanding of technology, although have less opportunity to extend their learning through more frequent use of items such as telephones, magnets, magnifying glasses, binoculars, keyboards and tape measures.

Children have good opportunities to express their individual creativity through a wide range of art and construction activities. For example, they begin to communicate their own ideas as they draw, paint and create 3D models. Children have good opportunities to explore their senses as they feel, smell and taste during cooking and food tasting activities.

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

The provision is outstanding.

All children settle quickly into the pre-school nursery life because there are excellent procedures to support them. The staff are extremely warm and caring. This helps children take the difficult step of separating from their families. Children develop a strong sense of belonging to the pre-school nursery. They are able to use book bags with the pre-school nursery logo which promotes the children's sense of belonging to a group. They see their photographs displayed and look at these frequently, talking about themselves and their friends at pre-school nursery. Children help to make the displays by selecting pictures, suggesting words and captions, and enjoy helping staff to make story books. This shows children that staff value their contributions and ideas. Children's individuality is also respected as they find their own names when they arrive and have areas in which to keep their own personal belongings. While staff encourage children to join in whole group sessions, staff show they respect the individual children's choices by letting them sit out and engage in their own play.

Children play and learn in an environment where staff promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children particularly well. Children develop an exceptional understanding of people's similarities and differences because they see many positive images around them and play with toys and resources which reflect diversity. For example, they have daily access to puzzles, books, play figures, and posters and pictures displayed around the hall depicting differences of all kinds. Children are beginning to appreciate that there is a bigger world outside of their town and that other people have different customs and beliefs. They celebrate a range of festivals and enjoy practical experiences to help them understand diversity. For example, they dress up in kimonos as they begin to learn about Hina Matsum, a Japanese festival in March, of Peach blossom and costume dolls.

Extensive strategies are in place to promote the welfare and development of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties. There are two named members of staff who co-ordinate the sharing of information to enable all staff to meet the individual needs of the children and plan for their ongoing progress. Practical steps such as time lines and 'now and then' charts support children's understanding of nursery expectations and routines.

Children's good behaviour is encouraged very effectively because they play and learn in a calm and well-organised environment created by the staff. Children are given lots of praise and encouragement for the things they do and achieve, which promotes their self-esteem and promotes positive attitudes to future challenges. Staff are good role models for behaviour because they treat adults and children with respect. Children are encouraged to think about

how their behaviour affects themselves and others, which promotes their understanding of the consequences of the actions and decisions they take. Staff plan many activities and use everyday experiences to help children talk about their feelings, which helps children verbalise why they may feel sad, happy or excited. Children are learning right from wrong and treat each other and their environment with respect. They form good friendships and play amicably together. Children are polite, helpful and share their own experiences with each other. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's welfare is exceedingly well promoted because staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children. There are superb systems in place to ensure that information is shared between staff and parents and carers. Children's needs are very well met from their first day at pre-school nursery because parents provide staff with extensive information about their child's needs and routines at initial visits. Regular newsletters and letters are sent home informing parents of pre-school nursery events and up and coming learning topics. Notice boards and tables ensure parents and carers have access to policies, procedures and new information. Curriculum planning is displayed in the nursery so that parents and carers know what their children are working within both the 'Birth to three matters' and Foundation Stage frameworks. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the children's assessment records and the next steps for their child's progress. This is achieved by key person meetings, where these staff sit and talk with individual parents about their child's progress and by the daily communication books that are sent home each day in the children's book bags. Each term there is an open night which enables parents to come into the pre-school nursery to play alongside their child and to see how staff deliver the curriculum. Parents are encouraged to send in things of interest from home. All these measures promote excellent consistency between home and pre-school nursery life, helping to promote children's good development and well-being. All parents spoken to during the inspection and those who completed questionnaires were very complimentary of the pre-school nursery and the staff, with one parent commenting that "The staff treat all children as individuals".

Partnership with parents and carers of funded nursery education children is outstanding. Parents receive outstanding quality information about the provision, including the educational programme; they are informed about children's progress and achievements, both verbally and in comprehensively written reports. Children benefit from these good relationships because they see their parents working closely with the staff. Parents are well informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum and how this promotes their child's learning in the pre-school nursery. There are excellent systems in place to enable parents to contribute to their children's educational progress and to support their children's learning at home.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The children are protected and their welfare promoted because there are appropriate systems in place to ensure adults working with the children are suitable to do so. Recruitment and induction procedures are in place and ensure that all staff are aware of working practices in the pre-school nursery. There is an ongoing system for staff appraisal which includes their future professional development plans. These measures promote staff and pre-school nursery development and ultimately promote positive outcomes for all children.

The manager has many years experience working at the group and has attended numerous additional training courses to update her skills and knowledge. There is a strong management team who motivate and support the stable team of staff. The team are very confident in their

working practices and work together well to organise the busy daily routines efficiently. All staff have a strong commitment to ongoing training to develop their knowledge and skills. They are proactive in implementing changes in the nursery where they see benefits for the children's care, learning and play. Children receive lots of individual care and attention because of the high staff to child ratios.

The operational plan clearly outlines the aims of the nursery and how these will promote the children's safety, care and learning. Regular staff meetings ensure all staff have the opportunity to contribute to the pre-school nursery working practices. The written policies and procedures underpin the good working procedures. All the required documentation is maintained well to ensure the efficient day to day management of the provision.

Leadership and management of the funded nursery education is good. All staff are positive in their approach and work hard to achieve constant improvement and good results with the children. They are committed to the improvement of care and education for all children. The management team and staff regularly review the working practices in the pre-school nursery and evaluate the impact on the children. This helps them identify areas for improvement which can be included in the nursery development plan.

Overall children's needs are met.

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

At the last inspection the provider agreed to expand the detail within the lost and uncollected children procedures and the sick children policy. These procedures have been expanded and therefore children are better protected as staff are fully aware of effective procedures in these instances.

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

Since the last inspection 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 water is freely available for children to access themselves throughout the session
- consider alternative more healthy snacks
- ensure appropriate hand washing procedures are in place at all times to reduce the risk of cross-infection.

### **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):

- Provide further opportunities that help children learn about how to operate simple equipment such as telephones, magnets and tape measures
- Further extend use of the outside area to expand children's learning in this area.

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)