

The Stables Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	204074
Inspection date	13 June 2007
Inspector	Patricia Mary Champion
Setting Address	1 & 2 Glenridge Cottages, Margaretting Road, Galleywood, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 8TS
Telephone number	01245 348159
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Registered person	Avis Richardson and Susan Mann
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?

The Stables Nursery is privately owned by an informal partnership. It opened in 1993 and operates from ten playrooms within converted stable buildings. The nursery is located in Galleywood on the outskirts of Chelmsford. All children share access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area. A maximum of 97 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery opens five days a week all year round. Operating times are from 08:00 until 18:00.

There are currently 170 children aged from seven months to five years on roll. Of these, 64 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions or full day care. The nursery serves the local community and surrounding areas. The setting supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs 34 staff, of whom 26 of the staff, including the two managers hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are five staff currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority, the National Day Nurseries' Association (NDNA) and the Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children relish using the facilities outdoors. They know that having fun in the fresh air and being active contributes to a healthy lifestyle. Children have a very good sense of space and move freely and confidently. They have access to an extensive range of outdoor toys and apparatus. Children enthusiastically ride scooters and other wheeled toys and carefully steer and manoeuvre them to avoid obstacles. They practise their climbing and balancing skills on a range of apparatus appropriate to the varying ages of the children. Parachute games, soft play equipment and the weekly ballet lessons encourage children to explore a greater variety of movements. Babies and very young children are provided with space to crawl, roll, stretch and explore in safety, both indoors and outside. Low-level equipment is provided so that babies can pull themselves up to a standing position.

Children can relax or sleep in comfort according to their needs. Clean bedding is provided for each child. Staff are knowledgeable about the children's sleep patterns and provide a calm, restful atmosphere so that they can sleep undisturbed. Children are closely monitored as they sleep. The staff are very mindful of the effects of warm weather and take steps to protect the children from the sun. Plenty of shaded areas are provided outdoors and fans are used indoors to keep the playrooms cool. The children all wear sunhats when they play outside, staff apply sun screen and closely monitor the children's liquid intake.

Children benefit from a nutritious diet. Fresh food is cooked daily on the premises and parents are made aware of the weekly menu. Healthy snacks are provided that include a variety of different fruit everyday. Children are encouraged to feed themselves and staff give good support and promote their independence. Meal times are social occasions as staff sit with the children and encourage them to enjoy their food and chat with their friends. During warm weather children eat alfresco on the verandas of the playrooms or enjoy picnics on the grass. Drinking water is freely available and children have their drinks bottles and cups within eyesight at all times so that they do not become thirsty or dehydrated. Staff are fully aware of any allergies or special dietary requirements so that individual children's needs are met.

Children thrive because staff have consistent routines regarding health and hygiene procedures. Tables are cleaned prior to use with anti-bacterial spray and staff wear disposable gloves and aprons when preparing food or changing nappies. Children are protected from the risk of cross-infection when they use liquid soap and paper towels. They know about the importance of washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet as this will remove germs. The nursery has a sickness policy that protects children from illness and infection. Appropriate procedures are in place for recording any accidents and staff can deal with minor injuries. First aid boxes are accessible and the contents are regularly checked. All staff hold current first aid certificates. Parents give prior consent before staff administer medication. However, children's health is potentially compromised because the staff do not consistently record the times in which they administer medicines and parents are not asked to sign medication forms to acknowledge the entry.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play and investigate in a comfortable, safe environment. The playrooms are bright and colourful with an array of posters, photographs and children's artwork, placed at all levels so that they can be seen by both children and parents. In the rooms occupied by babies and toddlers, staff have decorated the walls and ceilings so that whatever position a baby is in, there is something interesting to focus on. There is sufficient equipment such as child-sized furniture so that all children in any one room can sit together and eat or play in comfort. Babies and children access a broad range of clean, safe resources when they play indoors. All toys within reach of babies are safe for them to explore using their hands or mouth. Play materials are rotated throughout the day to provide added interest. Toy boxes and drawers are clearly labelled and stored at child height so that children can make choices and take decisions about their play.

Children stay safe as the staff undertake daily risk assessment of each room. A thorough fire risk assessment has been done by Chelmsford Borough Council. The playrooms are sited around a large central outdoor play area. Children are prevented from exiting unnoticed as there are two bolted gates at the entrance to the nursery complex. The management of the nursery has already identified a need to further improve the security of the complex and has ordered a CCTV system. All visitors to the setting are monitored. A family password system is in operation and there are clear collection procedures to ensure that staff do not release children to unauthorised persons.

Children learn about their own personal safety through topics and daily routines. In the event of a fire children know how to evacuate the premises safely as they practise the drill on a regular basis. They learn about road safety when they go on walks and learn how to telephone the emergency services when they cover topics about people who help us.

Children are safeguarded as staff are fully aware of their child protection responsibilities. The child protection guidelines from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) are readily accessible. This ensures that staff are aware of current information and the procedures if they have any concerns about a child's welfare. There is a designated member of staff to deal with safeguarding issues who has a commitment to attend further training relating to child protection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have great fun as they play with a wide range of play materials and toys. They form warm relationships with the staff and enjoy making choices about their play. The good level of care provided greatly adds to the way in which children settle comfortably into the nursery. An effective key worker system operates and the staff get to know the children and their families well. Interaction between the children and staff is lively and friendly. Language development is supported by staff who ask carefully formed questions to make children think about the themes and topics. Connections are made between home and the nursery, when children chat animatedly with staff about siblings or recent events such as holidays.

Children are all eager to explore sensory materials as they play outdoors. They spend time totally absorbed as they investigate sea creatures in water or scoop sand or compost into containers. They show great excitement as they chase bubbles, examine shaving foam or model

with clay. Children are interested in taking care of living things. They learn about the care of guinea pigs and hamsters while they observe the nursery pets.

Babies and toddlers are happy and play contentedly with the toys on offer. Heuristic play has been introduced to the youngest children in the nursery. Staff have produced treasure baskets with natural and sensory objects and materials for babies to discover and investigate. The planning and assessment cycle for the youngest children and babies is securely linked to the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Activities meet the needs of all groups of children aged under three years and are firmly based on assessments of what they can already do and what small steps need to be taken next.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and of how children learn. The children get a healthy balance of experiences and the curriculum is varied, with plenty of opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves. The curriculum is planned to capture children's interest and curiosity and as a result children are motivated to learn. The indoor playrooms are well resourced and children benefit from the excellent use of the outdoor area. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals given their starting points and capabilities. Activities are adapted to provide support or additional challenge. Frequent reviews of children's progress mean that any difficulties are quickly identified and suitable intervention is put in place.

Children are engaged in the range of stimulating activities and some are eager to tackle problems and persevere for extended periods to complete their tasks. They are able to sit and listen to each other at circle time and revisit through discussion their activities and experiences. For example, when children look at photographs depicting buildings in London, they remember the names of the city's landmarks and discuss memories about their visits to museums. Children communicate confidently and expressively. They enjoy chatting to staff and their friends as they describe what they are doing. Children are learning to write their names and form letters correctly. They trace or copy captions for their pictures and are starting to recognise simple words from the labels displayed in the playrooms. Children are starting to link sounds to letters by naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet.

Children ably use mathematical language in everyday play and daily routines. They learn about simple calculation when counting the number of children in a line and work out how many there are when one more child joins the line. Children compare numbers as they work out the number of rungs on a ladder, and which ladder is the longest. Resources are provided to encourage children to sort items according to shape or colour. Staff support children when counting high numbers, for example, when they count together the 41 beads on the string. Sand and water play encourages children to learn about volume and capacity and children construct channels so that they can investigate how water flows.

The topic and theme based projects help to develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Children learn about buildings and bridges and their artwork with further discussion and stories helps to consolidate the children's knowledge. For example, children use clay to make an Eiffel Tower or use recycled materials to make houses. Children gain much from the visits to places of interest. They acquire new knowledge as they go on outings within the local community, for example, to the library or the church. Children go for dinosaur hunts on the nearby common. Trips and outings are also organised to venues such as Marsh Farm, Colchester Zoo and the Paradise Wildlife Park. Children have very good opportunities to learn about

technology. They independently access the computers during their free play and competently manoeuvre the mouse to control movements on screen.

Children have a balance of adult led or free creative opportunities. A wide variety of art materials are provided each day and children enjoy exploring colours as they paint or make collages. Children create greetings cards for Father's Day or draw pictures of themselves playing with friends. Children sing enthusiastically and learn about the sounds made by musical instruments. They play imaginatively using a range of props or costumes and animatedly pretend to be fairies or princesses

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel a sense of belonging in the nursery as they have named drawers and coat pegs. Each play room is filled with children's own work or photographs of them taking part in the activities. This makes the environment personal to them and reflects their achievements. All children are warmly welcomed each day and they are respected and valued as individuals. Children that have learning difficulties and/or disabilities participate fully in the range of activities. Staff attend training regarding special educational needs to ensure that they meet children's individual development and welfare needs.

Children's behaviour is very good. They understand the need for responsible behaviour, respond immediately when staff need to gain their attention and willingly follow instructions. Children are developing good social skills as they share and take turns as they play. For example, children independently use a sand timer to enable them to take turns when they use the computer. The staff are calm, effective role models. They speak respectfully to the children and promote politeness and good manners. Staff use positive strategies such as sticker reward systems and plenty of praise and encouragement to boost children's confidence and self-esteem.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Harmonious relationships between the children mean that they work and play together cheerfully. Children take responsibility as they willingly help to tidy up and put things back where they belong. Children show respect for others. They learn simple sign language and have developed an awareness of visual impairment through investigating resources provided by visitors from Look Essex. Children become aware of wider society by celebrating traditional and religious festivals and by using books, artefacts and play equipment that portray positive images of diversity. There are optional weekly French lessons where children enjoy learning another language through songs and games.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are made to feel very welcome. Information is displayed on various notice boards throughout the nursery, newsletters are sent out and there is a well-written prospectus and policy document. Parents receive daily diary sheets or reports in communication books. This ensures that they are kept fully informed about food eaten, sleep times, nappy changes and the activities the children have taken part in. Parents of children receiving funding for nursery education receive a written diary sheet linked to the areas of learning and are involved in their child's learning by taking part in the book share scheme. Open days are held. Regular written reports are shared regarding children's progress and achievements and parents can view their child's records at any time. However, parents of the funded children are not currently invited to make contributions to the children's developmental records or plan with staff their next steps in learning. Parents speak positively

about the nursery, paying compliments about how the friendly staff sensitively show care and affection towards the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by a caring, well-qualified staff team. They are supported positively because staff are effectively deployed. The minimum required adult-to-child ratios are met at all times within each room. Contingency arrangements work effectively to cover staff absences regarding holidays and sickness. There are plenty of relief staff that work at lunch time to ensure that full-time staff can take their breaks during the day. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that all staff are suitable to work with the children. Staff are keen to extend their childcare practice and attend a wide variety of training courses to further their ongoing professional development. The nursery routine is well organised and operates smoothly.

The essential documentation that supports the efficient and safe management of the nursery is in place. A high regard is given to confidentiality and paperwork is securely stored. Written policies and procedures cover all aspects of practice within the nursery and help promote positive outcomes for children.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The owners of the nursery are committed to the improvement of the nursery and development of the staff. Self-evaluation is realistic and accurate; the owners are fully aware of the nursery's strengths and also areas they wish to develop further. Activities are routinely evaluated, a staff appraisal system operates and training has been given a high priority. Staff are well motivated and focussed on the development and achievement of all children.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the providers were asked to develop the children's use of the outdoor area and to meet any recommendations made by the fire safety officer. Children's enjoyment and achievement has been enhanced as imaginative and innovative outdoor activities are regularly planned that cover all areas of children's learning. Children safety has improved because a new fire alarm system has been fitted, staff check weekly that fire alarms are working and fire blankets, and fire extinguishers are in place.

At the last inspection for nursery education the providers were asked to improve the staff's understanding of the principles underpinning the Foundation Stage and to develop the short-term planning. Staff have attended training relating to the Foundation Stage and now plan more valuable, practical, purposeful play experiences. The short-term planning now includes information detailing how staff support or challenge the children. Consequently, the children's progress and learning opportunities have been enhanced.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action to meet the National Standards. On 16 May 2005 Ofsted received a complaint which raised concerns under National Standard 11: Behaviour. Ofsted conducted a visit to the provision on 26 May 2005. The provider informed Ofsted that there had been some problems with biting within the nursery. The provider now ensures that each incident is recorded

appropriately and parents informed. The provider has contacted the local partnership for support in dealing with such incidents. Although the provider has good levels of communication with parents, following the investigation they were given an action under National Standard 12: Working in partnership with parents and carers, to formulate an action plan to show how complaints will be managed in a consistent way. A satisfactory response to the action was received on 26 June 2005 and the provider remains qualified for registration.

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.

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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):

- review and update the medication records to ensure that staff consistently record the time when medicine is administered and parents sign to acknowledge the entry.

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 partnership with parents further by considering their observations about their child's learning and work with them to plan the next steps in children's learning.

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