

Head Start Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130587
Inspection date	14 September 2007
Inspector	Jill Nugent
Setting Address	86 High Street, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, EN6 5AT
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Registered person	Head Start Day Nursery
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?

Head Start Day Nursery opened in 2000. It operates from five rooms in a renovated building, originally a bank, in Potters Bar. Children share access to an outdoor play area. The nursery is open every weekday from 07:30 to 18:30 all year round.

A maximum of 50 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 78 children on roll, of whom 20 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those have English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 18 staff, all of whom hold relevant early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well because the nursery has good medical procedures in place. All records are maintained appropriately and parents are well informed about any accidents or illness. Children are excluded from the nursery if suffering from a contagious illness so as to protect others from infection. They are well taken care of in the event of an accident as staff are suitably qualified in first aid.

Staff are attentive towards matters of hygiene and ensure that children are cared for in a clean environment. Young children sleep according to their needs so that they avoid becoming over tired. There are strict guidelines in place for nappy changing. Children are becoming aware of good hygiene practice themselves. They learn to wash their hands before eating and clean their teeth afterwards. These procedures contribute to keeping children healthy.

Children have an increasing awareness of a healthy lifestyle. They talk about which foods are good for them. They are offered a range of nutritious and healthy meals. The menu is well balanced and includes a variety of home-cooked meals, using locally produced foods where possible. Children's dietary needs are met well. Special dietary needs are highlighted so that all staff, including the cook, are aware and manage diets appropriately. There are written procedures in place for the preparation of baby's milk diets. Drinking water is available in all rooms, therefore, children are well nourished.

Children have good opportunities to take part in physical activity. They enjoy free play in the outdoor play area and also take part in organised activities, such as music and movement. Very young children have space to crawl around and pull themselves up on furniture and this helps them to develop self confidence. Older children develop manipulative skills through using tools and containers in sand and rice play. Children visit the local park regularly where they can practise and extend their physical skills. Children benefit from these opportunities for fresh air and exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in welcoming surroundings. Staff provide a child-friendly and comfortable environment. The rooms are bright and colourful with many displays of photographs and children's work. Children's safety is promoted through minimising potential risks. Regular risk assessments are carried out and acted upon if necessary. Notices around the nursery act as a useful reminder to staff to maintain a safe working environment. There are good fire precautions in place and staff practise evacuating the premises so that everyone is aware of what to do in an emergency. Children are always counted back into the nursery after playing outdoors. They keep safe on outings because staff follow clear guidelines and maintain good supervision.

Children are generally secure on the nursery premises. Young children are restricted to certain areas of the nursery as a system of safety gates is in place. Any low windows that open for air are covered with a grid for safety. There is a bell entry system on the main door and visitors are closely monitored. However, there is a slight security risk associated with the main gate outside, and with the adult toilet indoors.

Children use suitable and safe resources and equipment. They are able to access resources independently as these are stored at low level and clearly labelled. Staff check the condition of resources so that children can always play safely. They set out a selection each day and rotate them during the day in order to provide variety. Children are learning to keep themselves safe in different ways, for example, tidying away after themselves so that they can always move around freely and safely.

Staff have a good understanding of child protection issues. There is a clear written policy and all staff receive training in this area. They have systems in place for recording concerns and seeking advice. They ensure that children always leave the nursery with a known adult. Therefore, children are well protected in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are well settled at the nursery and play happily. The babies enjoy sitting with staff exploring collections of items in treasure baskets. They are encouraged to use their senses and develop communication skills. Older children enjoy good opportunities for free play, for example, mark-making, construction and imaginative play. Children develop independence through being offered a variety of choices. Very young children become absorbed in their own exploration at times, for example, looking at photograph books and using play gyms. Older children concentrate well on drawing pictures and fitting together puzzles. Children gain confidence through the support of staff who offer help if needed, for instance, when clipping pegs to make a pattern. Children develop self-esteem as staff join them in play and offer praise.

Staff make good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework in planning a range of learning experiences for children. These meet the needs of young children effectively. The plans include many opportunities for exploring different materials, such as ice and cornflour and for being creative. Younger children like to explore chalks and paint freely, older children begin to create pictures around a theme, for example, holidays. Children respond positively to adults who show interest in them and suggest new ideas. For instance, young children are delighted when staff introduce bubbles into the room. Older ones particularly enjoy the opportunity to move to music in their own way. There are good opportunities for children to go out into the local environment, for example, visiting local shops. Staff make observations of children during activities in order to assess their stage of development. All written planning is evaluated and evidenced using photographs. In this way staff are able to plan appropriate next steps for children.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage of learning and plan a range of activities and learning opportunities for children. There is an emphasis on free choice play with extra adult-led activities covering the six areas of learning. These help to focus children's learning in relation to the stepping stones. Staff talk with children, encouraging their use of language through conversation. They suggest ideas and promote learning through child-centred play, for example, asking children to count 'astronauts'. However, they do not always interact effectively to engage and extend children in their self-chosen activities, especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is assessed continually, although staff are introducing a new system for observing and assessing children's development. This system needs to be developed so that it shows children's progress clearly and informs future planning effectively.

Children are progressing well towards the early learning goals. They show interest in the activities on offer and enjoy their play. They are confident and get on well with each other. For example, a large group of children enjoy water play together. Children like listening to stories and this helps to generate an enjoyment of books. They are developing an awareness of the different sounds and letters of the alphabet and spend much time exploring mark-making and drawing equipment. However, they are not always encouraged to extend their early writing skills through staff taking opportunities to increase their knowledge of letters and words. Children are learning to count and compare size and weight. They practise number skills in board games and learn how to complete jigsaw puzzles, although there are limited opportunities for children to extend their number skills during play or in group activities.

Children have good opportunities to explore materials and find out about living things. They have fun playing with interesting materials, such as sand, pasta and coloured water. They learn how to look after tadpoles and fish and how to grow plants, such as sunflowers and beans. Children develop technological and creative skills as they learn different techniques for painting and modelling. They express their own ideas in their drawings and take part in group projects, such as making 'dinosaur prints', stars and planets. They explore different sounds using a collection of musical instruments and enjoy singing favourite songs. In physical activities, such as music and movement, or stretch and grow, children are able to increase their body control and coordination. Overall, they are developing an understanding of the world around them and enjoying opportunities to take part in stimulating creative and physical activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are valued and included and feel special. Staff get to know children very well and are aware of their individual needs. They pay particular attention to those who are unsettled and consequently children develop a sense of security and begin to enjoy the activities. Staff take into account the information gleaned from parents about individual children and this is passed on from room to room so that children always receive the appropriate care. Children develop a sense of belonging. They have good relationships with staff and enjoy getting together in groups during the day. Children are given many opportunities throughout the day to make choices and thereby learn to make decisions. Staff ensure that all children have the opportunity to take part in organised activities. They offer good support to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through a system of individual plans and liaison with other professionals.

Children learn to respect the needs of others. They behave extremely well, learning to share fairly and take turns. They are very aware of their boundaries because staff have a firm, consistent approach and supervise closely. Children follow instructions well, for example, they move around the premises in an orderly fashion. They are encouraged to make a positive contribution by clearing up after themselves and often take the initiative to do so, for instance, sweeping up spilt sand. As a result, children are learning to behave responsibly at all times. They are becoming aware of a wider society through taking part in activities which reflect different cultures, for example, food tasting and flag making.

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

The nursery has an excellent working partnership with parents and carers. They receive an attractive and informative welcome pack which contains details of policies and procedures. Notice boards around the building provide relevant information about childcare and details of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Numerous photographs are displayed showing how

children learn within each outcome. Staff exchange information daily with parents by way of a link book or daily chart. Books for babies include a personal comment on the day which helps to individualise the feedback. Parents are always consulted about changes in children's care, for example, weaning or potty training. Staff collect photographs of children into nursery diaries, adding individual labels which highlight and personalise children's nursery experiences. These provide an extremely attractive and useful record of children's time at the nursery. Parents are highly satisfied with the care offered by staff and this close liaison is of great benefit to the children.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funding for nursery education is good. There is information about the Foundation Stage of learning in the welcome pack and on notice boards. The newsletters include information on the current theme and the weekly planning is on display. Staff encourage parents to become more involved by asking children to bring in items relating to the theme. There are good opportunities for parents to exchange information regarding their children's progress at regular consultations.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery's policies and procedures work well in practice to promote the outcomes for children. All the necessary policies are in place and staff work to a detailed operational plan which helps to ensure the health and safety of all children. The attendance records are well maintained and information on children is kept securely in the office. There are very good written procedures on staffing and consequently staff are aware of their responsibilities and work effectively as a team. The induction procedure for new staff is particularly thorough and staff are encouraged to attend training courses in order to continually improve their practice. Since the previous inspection they have attended courses in several areas, including Behaviour Management, the 'Birth to three matters' framework, Foundation Stage and Special Needs. Children benefit from their acquired knowledge and skills.

Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children. They maintain good adult child ratios and spend their time involved with the children. They are deployed effectively around the various rooms and follow daily routines, ensuring that children have opportunities for indoor and outdoor play. Children enjoy the social aspect of mealtimes. There is good access to toilets for older children who are encouraged to use them independently. Young children and babies enjoy close contact with each other and this contributes to the homely atmosphere. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The nursery owner meets with the manager regularly in order to monitor the provision and staff participate in the monitoring process through discussion at staff meetings. The manager oversees the systems of planning and assessment and works closely with staff in developing new ways of working. There are regular staff audits to ensure that outcomes are being met. The good management of the programme contributes to its ongoing positive development.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the nursery was asked to develop the Behaviour Management and Child Protection policies, review the organisation of outdoor play and ensure good hygiene at snack time. The policies have now been developed appropriately. The organisation of outdoor play has been reviewed and older children can now access the outdoor area at lunchtimes. Staff

have plans for further development of this area. The standard of hygiene at snack times has been improved. This response has led to an improvement in the outcomes for all children.

At the previous nursery education inspection the nursery was asked to improve the written planning and use of resources, develop the use of assessment and increase opportunities for parents to be involved with their children's learning. The planning has been reviewed and improved and provides opportunities for children to choose freely from a variety of resources. The system of assessment is still under review. There are now good opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning.

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

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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):

- ensure that children are always secure on the premises, this refers to the main gate and adult toilet.

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 develop the system of assessment so that it shows children's progress clearly and informs future planning
- ensure that staff interact effectively during free choice activities in order to promote and extend children's learning in all areas.

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