

Sawston Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Registered person	Sawston Childcare
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?

Sawston Nursery is run by a management committee and board of trustees made up of members of the local community and parents of children attending the setting. It opened in 2000 and operates from a purpose-built building in the village of Sawston close to Cambridge. A maximum of 54 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 101 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, 29 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery employs 19 members of staff. Thirteen of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Five staff are working towards early years' qualifications.

The nursery uses elements of the Highscope approach to education.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities to learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating and they know that they need to wash their hands 'because germs make you sick if they go into your mouth.' Staff act as very good role models, wiping down surfaces before serving food and after children have eaten, to help children to stay healthy. Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. They run around and exert themselves outdoors so that they learn the importance of regular fresh air and exercise. They develop new physical skills such as riding bicycles or balancing on stilts; regular music and movement and P.E. sessions help children to develop good co-ordination and muscular control. Children learn about healthy eating through very interesting, practical experiences and discussions with their key-workers. For example, they spend a day with local scientists exploring the process of digestion by squeezing food in plastic bags to demonstrate how the stomach works. They talk about the benefits of drinking milk and know that, 'it makes your teeth hard.'

Children's nutritional needs are very well met. Special diets and allergies are catered for and a suitable system is in place to make sure that children with allergies are safe. A well qualified cook prepares well balanced snacks and main meals, which are cooked each day using fresh ingredients. Children thoroughly enjoy eating them and frequently ask for 'more'. Babies' bottles are brought into the nursery by their parents and these are immediately labelled and stored in the milk kitchen to make sure that they are fresh and each baby receives the right one. Staff in the baby room work very closely with the parents and the cook to follow babies' individual weaning requirements. Drinking water is available in each room so that children can have a drink when they need one so that they remain well hydrated and stay healthy.

The needs of children under three-years-old are well met by adults who have a good understanding of their developmental needs. Babies are able to take a rest when they want to; comfortable sleep mats for each child enables them to take a rest in the middle of the day so that they are refreshed and able to enjoy the afternoon activities. A satisfactory range of large and small equipment set out at activities enables children to develop new physical skills according to their stage of development.

If the children become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of nursery, adequate records are in place to make sure that appropriate care is given and staff are appropriately qualified to give first aid if they need to. However, there are inconsistencies in the way staff record accidents and medication that they administer to children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children move around safely under the constant supervision of the nursery staff. They learn how to keep themselves safe when using scissors or playing on the floor, helped by the gentle reminders from their key workers. Secure locks and high handles prevent children from leaving the premises without adult supervision. A security key pad on the main entrance and an administrator on duty in the reception area prevent adults entering the building without being invited. Staff are particularly vigilant during outdoor play sessions on the climbing apparatus to help children to learn new physical skills in safety. Children show their knowledge and

understanding of personal safety when they engage in role play: they talk about the 'stair gate' and remind each other 'you mustn't climb the stairs if you are a baby'. Adults further support children's learning about taking responsibility for their own safety through discussions during cooking activities about the 'hot oven'. In addition, staff arrange highly interesting activities, such as 'First Aid is Fun' where children learn how to 'dial 999' and seek assistance in an emergency.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who have a sound understanding of child protection procedures, which are in line with those set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. A designated person makes sure that any concerns for children's welfare are dealt with effectively and works with other professionals to promote children's best interests.

The daily risk assessment of the premises, which adults carry out before each session begins, addresses most of the potential hazard to children's safety. A wide range of written policies and appropriate procedures are in place, including regular fire drills, to help children know what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation of the premises. Children use resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development, and these are checked regularly by the pre-school staff to ensure they are in good condition and are safe. However, there are more children in the Light Blue room than there should be; children in this area do not have access to the minimum play space as set out in National Standard 4. This compromises their safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery and form good relationships with each other and with adults. They are confident and interested in the activities that they access during the free play part of the sessions. An interesting range of resources and equipment is prepared before children arrive and they choose from the suitable range of resources provided both indoors and out.

Children explore the range of activities, which promote learning in all areas of development. For example, they play in the 'café', telling their own stories and exploring their imagination. Children actively learn about capacity when they fill vessels with water or sand; they learn early writing skills when they make tracks with cars in wet sand or use paints to make marks on paper. Children explore natural materials such as snow and leaves, gloop or oats so that they learn about texture and develop their senses as they play. Children look at books and engage in conversations with their key workers to develop their communication skills. Babies explore the texture and colour as they find out 'what can I do with this?' when they paint on the floor using their whole body. They are able to pull themselves to standing using the sturdy furniture and look at themselves in mirrors so that they learn about the world around them and develop new physical skills. Staff sensitively support children's attempts to communicate, refining and extending their vocabulary. They smile encouragingly and respond to children's conversations with enthusiasm. As a result, all children are confident communicators and their language skills are developing well.

Adults with a sound understanding of how young children learn are on hand to facilitate children's exploration and encourage children to use a range of descriptive language to discuss their experiences. Children's experiences are enhanced by the skilful interaction of staff who formulate challenging questions that encourage children to think. They use the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework well to plan activities for children according to their age and stage of development. They identify clear learning objectives for the activities and have a good understanding of how the activities contribute towards children's progress. Key workers carry

out regular observations of children and use these to monitor children's achievements. However, staff do not use the observations of children effectively to plan activities that offer interest and challenge for all children. For example, nursery sessions are very structured and children are expected to pack away self initiated free play activities, where they are engaged in learning, in favour of adult-led activities that do not offer adequate challenge or interest. As a result some children spend periods of time where they are not actively engaged and this affects learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children use their imagination in situations such as the 'small-world' train set, water play or telling their own stories in the role play 'hospital'. Children use number names in their play and count groups of items reliably. They have a good understanding of calculation and talk about 'one more spoon-full' when they are adding syrup to melted chocolate. They use positional language and the language of mathematics expertly, talking about 'over the big bridge' or 'the next one will be a little one.' They communicate effectively and use a wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas and talk about what they know. They use language imaginatively to respond to discussions and to express sensory experiences, telling adults that, 'I have the builders at my home and they use lamps' or that syrup is 'sticky and gloopy like toffee.'

Children look at books alone and with adults; they turn pages from front to back carefully and listen with interest to stories. Children enjoy singing songs at circle time, clapping their hands in time, moving their bodies to the rhythm and joining in with finger rhymes. Children use everyday technology in their play. They explain how the 'Smarty Cat' computer game works and take photographs of trees in Autumn, using the digital camera. Staff provide children with opportunities to draw and paint so that they can explore mark-making techniques and develop early writing skills. Children write for a purpose in the role play hospital when they record the names of the 'babies' in the hospital bed. However, although children have access to a wide range of activities that develop their artistic creativity over time, they do not have access to sufficient resources to enable them to explore their creativity freely on a daily basis.

Staff working with children have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Key-workers carry out regular observation and use them effectively to monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals. Curriculum plans are detailed and show clear learning intentions; as a result, staff know how the activities they provide contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals.

However, observations of children are not used effectively to inform curriculum planning so that staff can provide activities that offer interest to all children and build on what they already know. Parents' observations of what children achieve at home are not added to children's development records so staff are not aware of everything that children can do. As a result, some activities lack challenge and adult-led activities do not interest all of the children. For example, staff do not always encourage children to write their name on their artwork; they use pre-cut shapes and templates for craft activities. The organisation of the session, where children pack away free play resources in favour of adult-led activities, does not promote children's independence or enable them to pursue their own interests. Consequently, opportunities for children to develop new skills and extend their learning are missed. This affects learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children show a strong sense of belonging as they greet key-workers and each other upon arrival at the nursery. Children work together co-operatively during group activities; they know that 'it's not kind to push'. Adults carefully explain what they expect children to do in a way that the children can understand, to help children to behave appropriately. Staff encourage children to respect each other's needs and to use conventions such as 'please' and 'thank-you', acting as positive role models themselves. They move around their rooms freely, choosing which of the activities provided that they will take part in during free play. However, the organisation of adult-led key group activities do not encourage children's decision making or promote positive behaviour. Adults expect children to tidy away self chosen activities in preference for adult-led activities, even when children are grossly involved in learning. Children then wait for long periods of time for their 'turn', some activities, such as melting chocolate in a bowl, lack challenge and resources are limited. As a result, some children are unchallenged and bored, which affects their behaviour and motivation. This impacts upon learning.

A suitable system is in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Key workers' ongoing observations are effective in identifying children who need additional support from outside professionals to help them to make progress. Key workers learn key words from parents to help children with English as an additional language to communicate effectively.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children's daily access to resources that reflect diversity and help them to learn about other members of society through their play is good. They talk with each other at activities about their families; circle time discussions enable them to talk about what they do at home so that they learn about each other's family cultures and traditions. Well organised activities such as making tents to celebrate the Jewish festival of Sukkot or a baptism of the nursery teddies to help children understand Christian traditions, develop positive attitudes towards diversity and encourage a strong sense of belonging.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Positive relationships effectively support children's care and contribute to the progress of children who receive early education. Parents receive regular information about nursery activities in newsletters and notice-boards, so that they can support their child's learning at home. A successful key worker system enables parents to share information informally when their children start at the session and to comment on written reports of children's progress twice a year. A regular questionnaire is sent out to parents to enable them to comment upon the provision and to identify areas for development. Parents are able to influence the day to day practice in the setting by their presence on the management committee. Complaints and concerns are recorded and responded to according to regulations. This enables children's individual needs to be met. However, parents observations of what their children achieve at home are not added to children's records to improve key workers' ability to plan activities that meet children's individual learning needs.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the nursery promotes positive outcomes for children. All areas of the nursery environment are attractive and provide stimulating displays of children's work and photographs of children at play, which creates a warm welcome for children and their families. The induction programme for new staff ensures that everyone knows about keeping children safe. All of the

legally required documents, including a procedure to record complaints or concerns, which contribute to children's health, safety and well-being, are in place and regularly reviewed. An annual system of appraisal identifies areas for professional development and staff engage in suitable training courses, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage or Child Protection. A questionnaire to parents helps the nursery staff to identify any areas for additional improvement and reflect upon their practice.

A good system is in place to make sure that staff working with the children are cleared as suitable and are well qualified. However, although the current manager is well qualified, highly committed to her own professional development and has greatly improved her knowledge and understanding of early years practice, she lacked practical nursery experience when she first came into post. Consequently areas of nursery practice that would benefit from improvement are missed. For example, staff do not implement nursery procedures for administering medication and recording accidents consistently; they do not organise the session to promote children's independence and decision making. The indoor space is not used appropriately to make sure that younger children have enough space to move around safely and the outdoor play space is not used effectively all year round.

Leadership and management of nursery education are satisfactory. The new manager and staff have regular opportunities to meet as a team and share information and exchange practice ideas. In addition, the nursery team access support from the advisory teacher in the local authority to identify areas for further development. However, there is no system to monitor the effectiveness of the programme for nursery education. As a result, activities lack challenge and the organisation of the session means that children's independence and decision making are not always well promoted. Some activities lack adequate resources and adult-led activities do not interest children. This impacts upon children's behaviour and hinders learning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery was asked to review the nursery policies and procedures to ensure they are up to date and comply with current legislation. All policies and procedures have been reviewed and are now up to date with current legislation. However, there is no system in place to monitor that they are implemented consistently. As a result, room leaders do not always countersign the administration of medication as stated in the written procedure; they do not always get parents' signature of acknowledgement on accident records as stated in the policy statement. This potentially affects children's health. This will be carried forward from this inspection as a recommendation for further improvement.

At the last inspection of funded education there was no recommendation identified. However, as a point for consideration the nursery were asked to consider ways to further improve the challenges provided for older and more able children. Therefore ensuring they continue to be motivated and excited by their activities as they progress towards the early learning goals. This point for consideration has not been implemented successfully by the nursery. Some activities continue to lack challenge for older and more able children and adult-led activities do not provide enough interest to motivate children. This issue will be carried forward as part of a recommendation for improvement following this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted investigated a concern in 2004 regarding the way the provision managed children's dietary needs and how they informed Ofsted of significant incidents. These related to National Standards 8: Food and Drink and 14: Documentation. A visit to the provision was carried out it was found that changes had already been made by the provider to make sure that children's special dietary needs were properly met. However, Ofsted were not adequately informed of significant incidents. An action was set under Nation Standard 14: Documentation. The provider remained qualified for registration.

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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):

- set up an effective system to monitor practice throughout the provision: make sure that all documents and children's records are effectively organised, that procedures for recording medication and accidents are maintained according to nursery policies and ensure that children's independent learning is well promoted at all times (this also applies to nursery education)
- improve the organisation of the play-space in the rooms according to minimum requirements in National Standard 4 (Physical environment).

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):

- improve the system for planning activities: use parents' and key workers' observations of what children enjoy and do well to plan play opportunities, both indoors and out, that offer all children adequate challenge and interest (this also applies to care)
- improve the organisation of the session to provide children with increased opportunities to make decisions and to access resources and materials independently: encourage children to develop new skills through the pursuit of their own interests both indoors and out; enable them to explore a wide range of materials at self initiated art activities to promote creativity (this also applies to care).

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