

# Animal Crackers

Inspection report for early years provision

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	218403
<b>Inspection date</b>	05 July 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Janet Ashcroft
<b>Setting Address</b>	Sandy Hill Farm, Fradley Junction, Alrewas, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, DE13 7DW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01283 791030
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Roderick Cooper & Maria De Lourdes Cooper
<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?

Animal Crackers Day Nursery opened in 1999. It operates from premises in the village of Fradley Junction, Staffordshire. The children have access to a secure outdoor play area. The setting is open from Monday to Friday all year round, except for bank holidays and one week at Christmas. Opening times are from 07:30 until 18:00.

The setting is registered to care for 71 children under eight years at any one time. There are currently 90 children on roll, aged from nine months to four years, who attend for a variety of sessions. Of these, 24 children receive funding for nursery education.

There are 16 staff who work with the children. Of these, 12 hold relevant qualifications to level 3 or above; two members of staff hold a level 2 qualification and two are working towards level 3. The setting receives support from the local authority and is a member of the National Day Nursery Association.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children are learning about good hygiene through the staff's well-implemented routines, for example, hand washing before eating and after toileting. Nappy changing routines are excellent and the children benefit from opportunities to stretch and kick and to engage in finger play and 'peep-o' games with staff. Older children are learning to manage their own personal hygiene through effective staff support and encouragement and through the provision of equipment to enable them to become self-reliant and independent.

Children's health is promoted through the setting's policies and records, which are easily accessible and generally well-organised. However, the procedure for cooling food in the baby room does not fully safeguard their welfare.

Children are given frequent opportunities to exercise and the large covered play areas allow outdoor play in all but the most extreme of weather conditions. The extensive lawn areas, the wild flower garden and orchard offer splendid opportunities for exploration and investigation and the children are able to practise a wide variety of physical skills as they harvest apples and pears and grow fruit and vegetables.

Meals are prepared daily from fresh, locally sourced quality ingredients and are of excellent nutritional content. They are carefully planned in advance to meet approved dietary guidelines and to provide the children with opportunities to broaden their palates by experiencing new tastes.

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

The provision is good.

The setting is exciting and stimulating; the décor is bright and attractive and examples of the children's creative work are extensively displayed, making the environment warm and welcoming for all. The children benefit from the creative organisation of the available space and the free-flow system within individual rooms fosters their sense of independence and choice.

The children enjoy independent access to a good range of stimulating toys and equipment, which is kept in a very clean and safe condition and which effectively fosters all areas of their development.

The staff are very aware of possible risks to children's safety and have taken steps to remove hazards in the setting. Consequently, the children are able to play, eat and sleep in safe and healthy premises. The children are actively learning how to keep themselves safe, for example, by participating in regular fire evacuations and road crossing drills. Activity topics and peripatetic visitors, including a nurse, inspire the children's interest in personal safety and reinforce their learning.

Children's protection from abuse and neglect is promoted through the staff's good knowledge of signs and symptoms and of reporting procedures.

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

The provision is good.

Children are able to engage in a stimulating and well-balanced range of activities, planned to provide them with rich experiences upon which to build their future learning. For example, tactile play with silver foil and shredded paper fosters the babies' developmental need for sensory exploration; toddlers are learning about cause and effect as they experiment with wet and dry sand and make gloop. The staff have enthusiastically embraced the 'Birth to three matters' framework; their effective assessment and planning actively supports the children in making decisions and choices, helping them to become autonomous and competent learners.

Children benefit from regular learning and play opportunities outside the setting, for example, trips to local places of interest such as farms and forests, where they learn about other living creatures and observe aspects of animal care. The children particularly enjoy their annual visit to Rosliston Forestry Centre to select the Christmas trees for their rooms.

Children's language and social skills are extensively promoted through the frequent questions asked of them by the staff, for example, about past activities and outings. The questions often challenge the children and make them think and staff listen carefully to their responses, enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem. Daily circle times, supported by soft toy characters, encourage the children to practise the conventions of socially acceptable communication and to listen to and respect the views of others.

### **Nursery Education.**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are interested and motivated to learn and participate eagerly in activities. Staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and are competent with its implementation. Activities have clear learning outcomes and the children's assessments are used to inform future planning, although the link is informal and sometimes tenuous. The staff make good use of time and resources and their practice of providing daily opportunities for physical play has enhanced the children's skills in movement and coordination. Staff are flexible within activities, responding to the children's interests. They use a varied range of methods to engage and extend the children.

Children enjoy listening to stories and are able to confidently discuss aspects of their favourite books. The print-rich environment fosters their understanding that print carries meaning and can be used as a method of recording and communicating, particularly at arrival time when they self-register their presence. Children are using mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems and are learning to negotiate and work together. They are able to work independently and are developing skills of self-reliance as they freely access resources and activities. Their sense of responsibility is fostered through small tasks and daily routines, for example, tidying away toys and offering food to each other at snack time.

Children investigate objects and materials through a variety of experiences. They are skilful in controlling tools and equipment to explore their environment, for example, using spades to hunt for mini-beasts. Their manipulative skills are increasing as they operate the computer keyboard and control the mouse to produce pictures and complete simple programmes.

Children are developing an interest in the natural world through topic work such as cultivating plants and bulbs and helping to care for the setting's guinea pigs. They are given frequent opportunities to make their own creative representations of the world around them, for example,

making snails during the daily free-play creative activities. Themed activities, such as exploring the discovery boxes, allow opportunities to explore shape, colour, form and space.

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

The provision is good.

The staff are committed to equality of opportunity, they recognise children as individuals and as a result the children benefit from having their differing needs comprehensively met. Through discussion, the staff described a proactive and sensitive approach to caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children are able to access a stimulating and meaningful range of resources and activities to actively raise their awareness of diversity and to promote their understanding of others. For example, role play, food tasting and craft activities provide exciting opportunities for children to explore other cultures and traditions.

The children behave very well. Staff have high expectations of the children and strategies to promote positive behaviour are consistent, age-appropriate and positive. Younger children respond well to gentle reminders to care for their environment, nursery resources and each other; older children are actively encouraged to resolve their differences through discussion, developing their skills of negotiation and compromise. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from the relationship that staff have built and strive to maintain with parents. A good number of strategies is effectively used to exchange general information, feedback on children's progress and on developments in early years care and education. Parents are warmly welcomed into the setting and are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Information is exchanged regularly in a variety of ways and staff provide parents with informal information about their children's progress. However, a more formal system of sharing children's progress towards the early learning goals has not yet been implemented. A good range of leaflets and posters keeps parents informed about current aspects of childcare and education, including information on the Foundation Stage.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children's welfare is effectively promoted through the staff's good organisational skills; records, policies and procedures are well-maintained and regularly reviewed. The children are able to explore and investigate in the available space, which is very well-organised to meet their needs. The effective and consistent adult support and the familiar daily routine fosters their sense of security. The children benefit from the good practice of the well-qualified and skilled staff team. The setting's strong commitment to continuous improvement, evidenced through the implementation of the staff library, ensures that all staff are kept fully informed of current trends in childcare practice.

Leadership and management of funded children is good. The manager encourages the staff to regularly review the provision in their quest for continuous improvement. There is a real desire to provide quality care and education for young children, evidenced by the strong programme of initial staff training and continuing professional development.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to improve policies relating to child protection, safety and behaviour. These have been reviewed and amended and now fully safeguard the children's welfare. The provider was also asked to improve resources representing cultural diversity. These have been improved and the children are now able to access a stimulating and meaningful range of resources and activities to actively raise their awareness of diversity and to promote their understanding of others.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to improve the procedure for accommodating individual learning needs. Assessments are now routinely and spontaneously implemented and are used to inform future planning, although the link is informal and sometimes tenuous. The provider was also asked to improve opportunities for children to develop skills in information technology. Spontaneous and planned activities are now routinely offered to develop and extend the children's skills.

## **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):

- take positive steps to prevent the spread of infection, particularly with regard to cooling food in the baby room

### **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):

- ensure that individual children are able to build upon their previous learning by using assessments to inform future planning
- ensure that parents are given appropriate information on their children's progress towards the early learning goals.

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)