

# The Little School House Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	300884
<b>Inspection date</b>	08 February 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Geneen Yvonne Hulse-Brown
<b>Setting Address</b>	The Little School House, Cobnar Road, Sheffield, S8 8QB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0114 2359993
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Early Years Care Ltd
<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?

The Little School House Nursery is a private nursery, which opened in 1998 and is part of a group of five nurseries owned and managed by Early Years Care Limited. It is accommodated in an old converted schoolhouse building in the Woodseats area of Sheffield. The nursery offers childcare to the local community and surrounding areas.

The nursery has three playrooms over two floors, with toilets, kitchen, office, staff room and storage space. The group has a secure outdoor play area. It provides full day care Monday to Friday 7.30 to 18.30, full year, and children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery cares for a maximum of 54 children aged from six weeks to five years; of these, not more than 18 may be under 2 years at any one time. There are currently 90 children on roll, of whom, 31 receive funded nursery education. The group supports children who speak English as an additional language and learning difficulties.

There are 13 staff who work directly with the children, of these, 10 have an appropriate early years qualification and three are working towards National Vocational Qualification levels 2 and 3. The nursery receives support from a local authority community teacher.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children undertake a wide range of activities that contributes to their good health. They enjoy daily activities both indoors and outdoors to develop their physical skills. The children have fun playing ball games, racing each other, rolling down the small slope in the garden and climbing on frames. Good use of outdoor space provides children with many opportunities to explore in all weathers. They recognise the need to put on coats and hats to play outside in the cold and demonstrate a good understanding of their bodies as they independently take off jumpers when they are hot. Children manipulate small tools well as they use scissors, pencils, glue spreaders and paint brushes with increasing skill. Babies and non-mobile children explore their surrounding with increasing skill, as they have many opportunities to develop their mobility as they pull themselves up and take their first steps. Children laugh and giggle as they play with the parachute, running underneath and 'pretending it's a den'.

Staff provide many opportunities to talk to the children about being healthy, through the use of topics, displays and planned projects, to help children explore what foods are good for them. They learn about healthy eating as part of daily routines and show an understanding of what is good for them as they chatter together. Children demonstrate a good understanding of their likes and dislikes, for example, when playing they talk about liking sweetcorn and dips and not liking soup. The children enjoy a well-balanced vegetarian diet at nursery. Children understand their bodies, helping themselves to water when they are thirsty. However, they have limited opportunities to extend their independence by serving themselves at meal and snack times. Children enjoy social meal and snack times where they can sit together and chat. Staff take into account children's individual dietary needs and plan accordingly, following home routines as agreed on care plans for young children and babies. Nursery menus are on display throughout the setting and regularly reviewed to meet the changing needs of the children attending.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment, where consistent methods of good hygiene practice ensure they develop their understanding of personal care. They know that they wash their hands before eating to 'get rid of germs that will make us poorly' and after doing messy activities. Children take themselves to the bathroom and demonstrate the importance of good practice in their play and activities. Well organised systems are in place to promote the children's general health, for example, comprehensive accident and medication recording. All staff attend mandatory first aid training, which is regularly updated as part of the nursery training plan.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure and safe setting where all potential risks are minimised. All available play offers children a fun and challenging environment. Displays, photographs and planned activity areas effectively enable children to build on what they know as they develop their independence. Children are increasingly confident as they negotiate their way around the nursery, choosing what to do within the organised routines of the day. They enjoy planned daily outdoor times to explore with enthusiasm, and regular walks to the park help them learn how to cross the road and remind children about keeping safe to consolidate their understanding. Children clearly understand how to manage the internal nursery stairs with increasing skill, as they discuss holding the handrail and taking care as they go through the nursery before leaving their playroom. They demonstrate a good understanding of boundaries, rules and safety, due

to the staff's consistent approach and constant reminders. All access to children's play areas is securely monitored by experienced staff who follow agreed nursery systems. Accurate recording systems demonstrate all present and staff monitor all visitors to the premises, checking identity and ensuring they sign the visitors' book before accessing children's areas.

Children actively choose what they want to play with from a broad range of easily accessible resources, which are attractively displayed on low shelving units and in boxes around the playrooms. Creatively planned areas provide them with space to relax and look at books, extend their imagination and explore their natural creativity as they develop their play. Children benefit from free access to well resourced craft areas where they can stick, paint and undertake tactile experiences, such as sand, water, play dough, shells and glitter.

Very good procedures are in place to support effective practice, as all staff complete mandatory child protection awareness. This is renewed regularly as part of in-house training. The area manager has completed the Local Safeguarding Children Board training and is in the process of updating the nursery policies with all managers to reflect the changes to legislation. Effective systems are in place to ensure children are safe, as the staff clearly understand their role in protecting children and use all information to promote the children's well-being.

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

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at nursery and make good progress in all areas of development. This is due to knowledgeable staff planning activities and experiences that keep children stimulated and interested. Staff effectively use the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage' and the 'Birth to three matters' framework to provide good quality care and education.

Children are well settled, secure and happy as they purposefully enjoy a broad range of challenging activities. They are very curious and interested in their surroundings, as they confidently establish very good relationships with staff and children alike. Visitors are warmly welcomed as children show interest in why they are there and what they are doing. The children ask questions and show off what they are doing with pride. Children actively select resources to undertake a wide range of tasks from well planned areas that offer easy accessibility for them to extend their independence. Children are starting to successfully plan their own time and making decisions about what to do, as they freely move between activities. However, on occasion they do not have additional opportunities to extend independence, for example, helping cut fruit for snack, pouring their own drinks, and when baking, sharing large mixing bowls. Children sit patiently as they wait their turn to stir the mixture during baking activities, although they have limited 'hands-on' experiences to extend their play and learning. They confidently put on shoes and coats to play outdoors and find aprons to paint. Activities are adapted in response to the children's individual needs, ideas and suggestions. Children are sensitively encouraged and supported to try out new skills, such as following computer programmes and learning Spanish.

Observations and staff's knowledge of the children ensure that they receive high levels of support to effectively build on what they know to extend activities at the child's own pace. The nursery effectively uses the 'Birth to three matters' framework for working with children under three. Babies and young children's individual needs are successfully met as they are cared for in a warm, secure and sensory environment. They receive lots of cuddles, smiles and non-verbal signals to enable them to settle happily into the nursery. Babies and young children enjoy playing with cause and effect toys, as they explore what buttons do and noises the toys

make. They giggle with delight as they slowly discover sand, moving from the adult's knee to sitting in the tray and feeling the sand with their fingers and toes. Children have fun splashing in water, mixing paint as they create their pictures and squeezing play dough into shapes. They confidently explore well planned areas where they enjoy building and using their imagination in well equipped role play areas. Children enjoy outings to the local area and further afield.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff's good knowledge of the Foundation Stage ensures that children progress well in all areas of development. Children are very curious and motivated to learn through well planned and spontaneous activities and experiences. However, on occasions, the daily routines can limit children's access to choices and challenges to focus on independent learning.

Children are enthusiastic and confident as they negotiate roles in games and talk about taking turns when selecting activities. They help each other with coats and make space for friends to sit by them for snack. Children show good levels of concentration as they play together and alone to complete tasks and progress their ideas. Their good behaviour reflects the staff's high expectations. Children are learning how to manage their own behaviour, showing respect for others as they share and take turns.

Children listen intently to each other and confidently speak out at group times, recalling home events and talking about what they are going to do at the weekend. Staff are supportive as they make suggestions to extend the children's thinking and introduce new vocabulary. Children use language well as they hold conversations together and talk about rhyming words when listening to stories. They are confident as they finish rhymes and predict story endings. Children make good use of the mark making area, making lists, and writing notes to enhance their games. They confidently attempt to write their names on their work and some children spell out the letters as they engage visitors in conversations. Children are very interested in all around them, asking visitors what they are doing and why, as they show off their work with pride. They enthusiastically enjoy short sessions where they are learning Spanish words, colours and numbers, and smile with delight as staff praise their good attempts and achievements.

Children learn about number and problem solving through daily activities, counting and sorting as part of daily routines, baking, singing and ring games. They count the number of stars on their charts and work out how many more they need to fill it. Children count the number of candles when making pretend birthday cakes in play dough and compare how many each has. They demonstrate a good understanding of number and recognise numeral out of sequence. Children enjoy making patterns in paint and using the 'ridge machine' to make 'bumpy patterns', asking for help as needed to steady the machine as they turn the handle. They look at how tall each other is using the height chart and discuss who is the tallest and smallest. They are starting to solve simple problems as they help themselves to sticky tape and scissors to make rolled up paper into telescopes.

Children enjoy learning about the lives of others through topics and planned activities. They show increasing skill as they competently draw patterns using the computer and then print off their masterpieces. Children enjoy planting seeds and discuss together where different things grow. For example, apples and pears grow on trees, and carrots and potatoes grow underground. Children demonstrate high levels of concentration as they work together to construct simple and complex models using different types of construction materials. They build and design, extending their imagination as they work towards an agreed end product.

Children explore their natural creativity using a wide variety of craft materials and resources in a well resourced craft area. They explore textures as they model play dough, squeezing it through their fingers and rolling it into shapes. Children have fun as they carefully pour water in the water tray and make models in the sand. They enjoy exploring different textures as they let glitter, sand and shells run through their fingers and compare how they feel. Children confidently mix paints together to get the desired colour when painting. They enthusiastically sing songs, play ring games and request music to dance to. Children use their imagination very well during role play activities, making up simple stories when playing with cars and making drinks in the home corner.

Effective observation systems monitor children's progress and information from parents completes the picture. Observations form an effective aid to planning and to progressing the children's learning. Children undertake a good range of focused and freely chosen activities, with staff responding and making changes to incorporate the children's ideas and suggestions where appropriate. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the early learning goals as they plan a broad based curriculum to include all areas of learning. Effective use of open-ended questions extends children's language, develops their thinking and values what they say as staff respond positively. Attractive and well presented displays of the children's work successfully contribute to promoting their self-esteem.

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

The provision is good.

Children build strong and respectful relationships with staff and each other, making friends easily and seeking them out to play with. They demonstrate very good levels of self-esteem to actively make choices and confidently ask questions; this is due to the consistent support given by sensitive staff. The staff value the children's individuality as they support them to learn and progress, by the effective use of praise and encouragement. Children learn to share and take turns from an early age as they wait to play games and join in songs. They listen to what each other has to say at group times and chatter together at snack times. Children patiently wait their turn to stir in the chocolate as they make crispy buns.

A broad range of meaningful activities introduces children to differences and similarities, increasing their understanding of the world around us. They enthusiastically share home experiences and listen intently to stories. Children broaden their knowledge of their local community, as they enjoy walks in the park and visits to see the animals at the rare breeds centre. At group time, the older children excitedly talk about their plans for the weekend, discussing going to the park next to nursery. Effective use of displays and photographs helps children to consolidate what they have done and recall fun events. Positive images are successfully promoted through the use of books, posters, toys and photographs. Staff and children share events and experiences together as part of planned and spontaneous activities.

Children's behaviour is very good as it reflects the staff's high expectations. The children understand consistent boundaries as they show care and respect for each other. They negotiate roles in games, share cutters in the play dough and recognise how many children can sit at an activity. Children discuss whose turn is next as they wait for their friends to complete tasks. Staff provide good role models as they show care and consideration for each other for the children to copy. The nursery has effective systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and English as an additional language, seeking help and support from other agencies as needed. Staff have attended Makaton training and are starting to use basic signs with the children as part of daily routines.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are well informed about nursery practice and what their children are doing. They have many opportunities to share information at the beginning and end of sessions. Parents receive daily diary sheets for babies and young children showing general information, including personal care. Staff work effectively with parents to meet the children's individual needs. Photographs and displays throughout the nursery show children involved in a broad range of fun activities. These displays introduce parents to the stepping stones and the 'Birth to three matters' framework, helping them understand how children learn. Daily routines and activity plans are clearly displayed in all playrooms to show parents what the children do on a daily basis. Staff share records with parents regularly and children's observations are easily accessible to parents at all times, as they are in plastic pockets for parents to look at when they choose. Parents confidently approach staff and demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the setting. Parents' evenings are held twice a year for more formal feedback. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery are good. The effective organisation of the educational provision provides very good support for children's care and learning. The experienced staff team have established effective working relationships and demonstrate a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This ensure children's individual needs are successfully met. There are secure systems in place to monitor, develop and evaluate the provision. Activity plans are monitored and evaluated on a weekly basis and the management team have started to look at the self evaluation form to review and assess the provision to plan the way forward.

There is a high commitment to training and development to consolidate practices and further enhance the provision, as staff access a wide range of in-house and local authority training courses. A very comprehensive range of policies and procedures are in place to support good practice and offer an effective service. Regular policy reviews form part of staff meetings to assess changes to working practice and keep staff well informed. The chain's nursery managers meet informally to discuss practice issues to ensure the nurseries offer a consistent approach. Staff have many opportunities to meet together to share information, discuss practice and raise concerns as they arise. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

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

The recommendations raised at the previous care inspection have been successfully addressed. Child protection issues are regularly updated with staff as part of mandatory in-house training. The nursery continues to assess the organisation of group time to effectively meet the needs of the children who attend.

Recommendations raised at the previous nursery education inspection relating to the presentation of information regarding the areas of learning for parents have been successfully addressed by the use of displays in the entrance to the nursery. Children have some opportunities to extend their independence within the planned routines of the day.

## **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 complaint 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):

- assess the way resources are used to offer children additional opportunities to extend independent learning. (also applies to nursery education)

#### **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):

- consider reviewing the organisation of meal and snack times to further promote independence and choices e.g. by supporting children in serving themselves
- continue to review routines to enable children to take more responsibility for planning their own time. (also applied 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)