

Little Scholars

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	511114
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Inspector	Nikki Whinton
Setting Address	Hugo Drive, Abbey Meads, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN25 4GY
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Little Scholars opened in 1999. It operates from a single room on the premises of Abbey Meads Community Primary School, in Swindon. It is linked with the Blunsdon Nursery School, which is also in the local area. A maximum of 22 children may attend the provision at any one time. The group opens five days a week for 38 weeks a year. Sessions are from 09.00 until 11.30 and 12.00 until 14.30. Children share access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 66 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 60 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The provision currently supports children with learning difficulties and /or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The provision employs seven members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have daily opportunities to experience fresh air and exercise within the fully enclosed school playground. They move freely and demonstrate good spatial awareness. They use a varied range of equipment such as hoops, beanbags and ride on vehicles, that helps to promote their physical skills. In addition, they take part in planned activities to support their large muscle development within the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children increase their fine motor coordination by using tools such as pencils, scissors and glue sticks with increasing control and dexterity.

Children eat a varied range of nutritious foods that help them to gain an awareness of healthy eating and are involved in the preparation of their mid session snack. Through sampling foods such as potato soup or soda bread, as part of topic work, children are developing their appreciation of food tastes. Allergies or dietary issues are discussed with parents as part of the registration process. All requirements are carefully recorded and accommodated. Children are able to help themselves freely to water throughout the sessions, which assists in ensuring they are consuming fluids in sufficient quantities to meet their needs.

Children have a good understanding of hygiene issues and benefit from the staff's good role modelling. For example, they know why they need to wash their hands before eating, 'you might get a tummy ache'. There is a range of measures in place to support children's good health. For example, parents are made aware of the group's sick child policy, written parental permission has been obtained for seeking emergency treatment, sufficient staff have a current first aid qualification and correct administrative arrangements are followed if accidents occur. However, whilst the administration of medication is recorded, some detail is lacking.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are clean, well maintained and of an appropriate temperature. Children are able to visit the toilet independently, which helps them to build their confidence and self-care skills. They are learning to gain an awareness of personal safety through measures such as tidying away toys prior to snack, thus reducing trip hazards and by taking part in emergency evacuation drills. There is a range of appropriate measures to support children's safety and help prevent accidents. For example, staff are suitably deployed, the premises are secure, socket covers are placed over exposed electric points and hazardous materials are inaccessible to children.

Children access an adequate range of age appropriate resources that are clean and suitably maintained. They benefit from the staff's understanding of safety issues concerning the purchase and ongoing maintenance of equipment. As a result, children play with toys that are safe, suitable and help to support their development.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by staff that are aware of child protection issues, confidentiality of information and the correct procedures to follow if concerned about the welfare of a child. There are effective arrangements for making sure parents are fully aware of the provider's child protection responsibilities prior to a child commencing in the provision.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter the provision willingly, separate easily from their main carer and settle down for group registration. Children are confident, demonstrate good self-esteem and show high levels of independence in carrying out tasks, such as washing and drying up the snack time crockery. They have good social skills, play cooperatively with their peers and realise the need to take turns, for example, when using the sand tray. Children have positive relationships with the staff and are forming good friendships with their peer group. They have opportunities such as when taking turns to prepare the snack or clear the tables, to have some responsibility and to be involved in the running of the group.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staffing team is aware of the areas of development covered by planned and spontaneous activities. They plan and provide a varied programme of suitably challenging activities that cover all aspects of the curriculum and support children's progress towards the early learning goals. Staff undertake regular written observations and assessments of the children using an adapted version of the Swindon Record Keeping System. Information obtained from assessment is then used in planning for individual children's future learning.

Children have a wide range of vocabulary and demonstrate a good understanding of how to link sounds and letters. They use language confidently, such as when sharing their news with staff and peers at the snack table, 'it's my birthday today, I'm 22'. They are learning to answer the register using greetings in different languages and confidently sign their good morning song. Children enjoy exploring books alone or in small groups and appear to gain great pleasure from taking part in whole group story times. During such activities, children concentrate well, listen attentively and enthusiastically answer questions posed by staff. They take part in regularly planned writing scheme sessions and have the opportunity to practise their early writing skills through routine activities, such as using pens and paper in the role-play corner. Children count confidently by rote and have the chance to solve simple mathematical problems as part of the daily routine. They quickly learn to recognise numbers expressed as labels through meaningful opportunities such as comparing their team points scores displayed on a pin board. Through practical activities such as exploring the shapes of boxes during three-dimensional craft, completing puzzles or playing with sand, children are gaining an understanding of shape, space and measure.

Children enjoy designing and building with a range of construction materials. For example, they gain great pleasure from building a wooden 'Lion Trap' with staff support. Children learn about patterns and change in nature by activities such as planting seeds and then observing the differences that occur when plants do not have exposure to light. Children welcome meaningful visitors to the setting, including a health visitor, a father that is a police officer talking about road safety and a blind parent accompanied by her guide dog, reading a Braille book story to the children. In addition, children take part in local outings such as to the nearby shop to post cards, as well as walks around the extensive school fields. Such opportunities enable children to gain a greater awareness of their local community. However, children have access to a limited range of resources to help them develop their understanding of information and communication technology. Children spontaneously burst into song and confidently sing a repertoire of songs without any need for staff support. They thoroughly enjoy engaging in role-play whilst using props and spend time making up plays using puppets. However, planned craft activities tend

to be adult directed with limited chances for children to initiate or develop their own creative ideas.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and treated as individuals. They are able to access a suitable range of resources, such as puzzles, posters and small world toys that reflect positive images of diversity. Support given to children attending the setting with additional needs or English as an additional language, is appropriate to promote their development and ensure their full inclusion within the group.

Children behave well. They are aware of the need for rules and immediately stand quietly and listen when a whistle is blown. Their behaviour is supported by staff that act as very good role models and use imaginative, effective, positive strategies to promote appropriate behaviour. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement. They learn to work together cooperatively, thus gaining points and receiving sticker rewards for their peer group teams.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are confident and demonstrate good self-esteem. They show genuine consideration for others. For example, one child spontaneously pours a mug of water, which she gives to her friend. Children are encouraged to express their emotions by completing the daily 'Feelings Flower', 'I'm happy cos' I'm going to Space Adventure with my Nan' Through practical activities, such as making clay candle holders or eating poppadums as part of a topic on Diwali, children are gaining an awareness of a range of cultures and festivals.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. The parents are given written information about the provision, its policies and procedures, prior to a child commencing in the provision. They are kept up to date through the planning sheets displayed in the entrance area, termly newsletters and informal opportunities, such as during the lunchtime break, when parents and staff can discuss children's achievements or any childcare issues. Parents are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning. For example, they are invited to complete an initial academic profile, share their skills or help their child to bring in articles from home to place on the topic related interest table. However, parents do not have regularly planned opportunities to review children's Foundation Stage assessments with staff or to share with staff what they know about their child to aid ongoing assessment.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The children's care and development is supported by a staffing team that works well together and has achieved required training and qualification levels. All legally required documentation is maintained, securely stored and available to support children's care. Careful records are kept of the attendance of children, staff and visitors. However, staff have a tendency to put out a range of resources for the children to use at the beginning of each session. Children have little opportunity to have ownership of the setting by self-selecting equipment for themselves.

The leadership and management are good. There is a commitment to training and development. Staff meet together on a regular basis to review the effectiveness of the provision and to plan for children's future learning. They regularly welcome advisors from the Swindon early years team to the setting to help support the development of the provision. The group has formed

links with the on site school. The pre-school children are able to use school resources and facilities whilst the reception class teacher is a regular visitor to the group. The deputy manager reviews the staff evaluations of planned activities and monitors the Foundation Stage assessments, to help ensure children are making progress across the curriculum. However, some areas for improvement raised at the last inspection have not yet been completed.

Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

As a result of the last combined inspection, the group was given an action, key issues and recommendations to help develop the quality of the provision.

The care report required the provider to keep a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children. The group was asked to continue the action plan that sets out how staff training and qualification requirements will be met and to provide parents with appropriate information regarding their children's progress. In addition, the setting was requested to explore ways of providing children with choices and opportunities to make decisions regarding activities and to record information about children's special dietary requirements.

The education report requested the group show in planning how work is made more challenging for older and more able children, by increasing opportunities for them to select resources, write their names, read simple words and solve simple mathematical problems. The setting was asked to link planning and assessment more closely to the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage and to allow children freedom to draw and create for themselves.

A written medication record book is now in place, which is signed by parents. Careful records are kept of children's dietary requirements. Staff training and qualification requirements have been met. Planning and assessment is linked to the Foundation Stage stepping stones, which helps to ensure children are suitably challenged. They have opportunities to draw, read simple words, practise their early writing skills and solve simple mathematical problems as part of the daily setting routine.

However, parents do not have regularly planned opportunities to be kept informed about their child's progress. Children have limited chances to experience child centred creative activities or to make independent decisions concerning resources and activities.

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.

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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):

- develop the organisation of the provision to ensure children have ongoing opportunities, as part of the daily routine, to make independent choices regarding the activities and resources they wish to explore

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, to ensure parents have regularly planned opportunities to review children's Foundation Stage assessments with staff and to share what they know about their child, to aid ongoing staff assessment
- develop the planning of the educational provision to ensure children have regular opportunities to initiate and develop their own creative ideas during art and craft activities.

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