



Little Otters Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 103037
Inspection date 23 June 2005
Inspector Michael Collins

Setting Address Marshgate, Camelford, Cornwall, PL32 9YN

Telephone number 01840 261593

E-mail

Registered person Little Otters Children's Centre

Type of inspection Integrated

Type of care Full day care, Out of School 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 Otters Children's Centre has been in operation since 1991. It is located on the outskirts of Otterham, near to the village of Marshgate. It has its own purpose built premises which opened in September 1999. It is a registered charity and is managed by a board of trustees made up of parents and interested others. A maximum of 29 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open five days a week all year round and is open from 08.00 to 17.30.

The premises consist of an office, children's toilets, staff and disabled toilet, a kitchen, a nursery room for babies, and two playrooms, of which the larger one is used for three to five-year-old children. There is also an enclosed outside play area. There are currently 43 children aged from 3 months to 11 years on roll. Of these 19 are in receipt of nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports children with special needs.

The setting employs eight staff to work with the children. Of these, four are qualified to level three, including the person in charge. Two staff are currently working towards recognised early years qualifications. The setting is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff have a clear understanding of the early years guidance, Birth to Three matters, and the Foundation Stage Curriculum. This knowledge and its planned use, coupled with a secure understanding of the setting's health and hygiene procedures, helps to foster and promote children's health.

A variety of planned activities aid in the children's physical development and where possible staff encourage and support children to be independent in self-care skills. For example, children enjoy physical activities in the outside play area using a variety of large and small play equipment. They are becoming aware of the effect physical activities has on their bodies and show this by removing jumpers when they are hot and asking for drinks to cool down when outside. Older children use the toilet independently. They learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care through example and discussion. Their clear understanding of why they must wash their hands before eating, and after using the toilet, helps reduce the risk of cross contamination.

Children help themselves to easily accessible drinking water inside the setting. Staff provide a selection of healthy foods, which appeal to children and meet their dietary needs. Documentary evidence of children's requirements and parental wishes are kept and acted upon. For example, providing vegetarian diets and avoiding certain foods because of allergies. The children enjoy a particularly good range of fruit, vegetables and nutritious foods. Drinks of milk, water or juice are always available to them to ensure their fluid levels are maintained.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The use of risk assessments and staff's consistent vigilance reduces potential hazards for children, both within the setting and when on outings and trips. By minimising risks, staff enable children to move around and explore their environment with safety and growing confidence. However, the water temperature for hand

washing fluctuates and can be too hot. Staff have a good understanding of how to achieve a balance between freedom and setting safe limits, and involving children in boundary setting and teaching them about safety. This allows children to learn some sense of danger and knowledge of how to protect themselves and others from harm.

There is a broad range of good quality resources that children self-select confidently. Staff use these with purpose and appropriately to aid and assist children in all developmental areas. Those with special needs are safe and fully included in the day to day activities because of sensitive adult support and the provision of suitable adaptations to resources and activities.

The setting promotes and safeguards children's welfare by maintaining all the required procedures and documents. For example, staff hold current first aid certificates and each has a good knowledge of child protection procedures in line with the local Area Child Protection Committee procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children clearly enjoy being at the setting and are eager to take part in the varied and stimulating, practical activities provided for their learning and enjoyment. There is a warm and caring atmosphere where children feel genuinely valued. They are able to talk clearly and discuss real and imaginary events. They initiate play and develop activities in a mature fashion. Children achieve well because staff have a good understanding of early years guidance, such as Birth to Three Matters and the Foundation Stage Curriculum, using this to ensure children are suitably challenged.

On arrival, children are happy and pleased to participate. Staff's sensitivity toward children's individuality and need ensures that new or anxious children are skilfully settled and happy to remain. The consistent, warm and caring relationships developed by staff foster the children's trust and sense of well being. These relationships result in good adult-child interactions, which in turn help to promote the development of early communication skills. The relaxed and child-friendly environment allows children to make confident choices and they are absorbed and happy in their play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children enjoy and choose from a wide range of appropriate resources and activities. Most have the confidence and abilities to initiate their own play. Children begin to make sense of the world and express their ideas as they join in a wide range of exploratory and sensory experiences. For example, they have visited a local farm, and engaged in the planting and care of their own sunflowers.

All children are eager to learn because of the stimulating environment provided for them. They sit patiently; listening intently to various stories, and confidently participate in group discussion. They are able to recall and recount events and details that interest them. All three and four-year-olds use mark making to represent

their ideas and older children are becoming adept at writing their own names. Through staff's commitment to supporting children with special needs, all children fully partake in activities and make good progress through the stepping stones. Children are very imaginative. They begin their own role-play and work in co-operative groups. All children are inquisitive and curious, clearly intrigued by the insects in the garden and wondering at their movement and life cycles.

Through use of planned activities, staff extend children's mathematical vocabulary and skills. Children use these skills with purpose in their play by counting objects and using 'money' in their role-play to purchase items at the 'shop'. However, staff overlook opportunities to continue with mathematical ideas and concepts during snack and lunch times.

Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. They gather verbal evidence of children's starting points and use their written observation and assessments to assist in planning for the children's next step. However, the lack of recorded starting points, and the occasionally inconsistent recording of observation and assessments, leads to the plans not clearly showing how activities will be extended for the more or less able child. Although, staff's personal knowledge of the children's attainment mainly balances this, enabling each child to make good progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff take the appropriate steps to ensure parents and children are warmly welcomed. They consider and act upon individual need, family background and parental wishes. In addition, in order to assist children to integrate, accept each other, and feel welcome in the setting, the staff plan and adapt resources and activities to take into account the children's individuality and family context.

Staff support children in sharing and turn taking. They set consistent boundaries and have developed warm mutually respectful relationships. Children's understanding of right and wrong increases as they respond to gentle reminders to care for their environment, the resources, and each other. All of this results in excellent behaviour from the children.

The children have good opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them through planned activities, visitors to the setting, and outings to local places of interest.

All of these positive approaches aid the fostering of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

A very good partnership with parents contributes greatly to the children's well-being in the setting. Staff actively seek parental views and opinions prior to admission, and on a regular basis whilst the child attends, these are valued, respected and acted upon. Staff ensure that parents are aware of how their children are progressing and developing. The involvement of parents in the setting and their good communication

with staff benefit the children greatly.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The good quality of organisation and outstanding leadership and management of nursery education enhances children's care and learning. The induction programme and very good teamwork make sure all staff work together well to promote children's health, achievement and enjoyment.

The setting is well organised and both indoor and outdoor space is used to maximise play opportunities for children. All legally required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place and regularly reviewed.

Along with the management committee, skilled and qualified staff, who are highly motivated and committed, contribute to the day to day running of the nursery and it's continued improvement and development. The good quality of the provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Under the leadership of the management committee and the centre manager, the setting has made all of the improvements required by the previous inspection. This, identified five key issues for education, and for care, set six actions for completion.

The setting has improved it's organisation by the implementation of robust and recognised recruitment and selection procedures. This, alongside policies and procedures to ensure that all persons coming into regular contact are vetted, or supervised until then, improves children's safety.

The setting has also improved children's health and safety by totally refurbishing the building, to provide a bright, airy, and child-friendly environment and disposing of hazardous equipment. They have also developed good risk assessment systems, obtained all required health permissions, and developed appropriate methods for the sharing and storing of confidential information. The implementation of lost or uncollected children policies has also improved children's safety, by ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities.

The setting has improved children's enjoyment and achievement within the setting with the implementation of systems to monitor, evaluate and improve the provision for nursery education, and by developing planning to cover all six areas of learning. They have also appointed new staff and ensured that all staff have a good knowledge of early years guidance. This ensures that all children are able to make progress in the stepping stones and that younger children, children with special needs, and those attending sporadically, receive equal opportunities to cover the full curriculum.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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):

- improve the safety of children by ensuring that the temperature of the hot water used for hand washing does not pose a hazard to them.

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 existing systems for the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of nursery education, in particular: ensure starting points are recorded; observation and assessment are consistent; and that planning clearly shows how activities will be extended for the more or less able child.
- develop further opportunities for children to explore mathematical concepts during everyday activities, particularly during snack and lunch times.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk