



Squirrels @ Ludwick Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY276945
Inspection date	15 June 2005
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Registered person	Squirrels Day Care at Ludwick Nursery School
Type of inspection	Childcare
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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Squirrels at Ludwick opened in January 2004 and operates from four large rooms in a purpose built building on a shared site with Ludwick Nursery School. The baby unit is part of the Neighbourhood Nursery scheme which gives babies from the local area priority. The nursery is situated in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 80 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each week day from 08:00 to 18:00 for 48 weeks of the year. All children share access to the secure enclosed outside play area. The nursery have close links with Ludwick Nursery School and the local community where they also provide a drop in centre for parents and children called Positive Beginnings. This focuses on health and

parenting issues for families with young children.

There are currently 115 children aged from 3 months to under 5 years on roll. Children come from the local catchment area. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 21 staff, 14 of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Staff receive ongoing training. The nursery have input from a Qualified Teacher Involvement and are members of the Pre School Learning Alliance. The nursery has obtained the Hertfordshire Quality Standards award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy an extensive and stimulating range of equipment to promote a healthy life and their physical development. The garden has been very well planned to incorporate different activities which encourage the children to use their bodies keeping fit and healthy. Children move with confidence and skill as they ride scooters, cars and two and three wheeled bikes. They thoroughly enjoy the cycle track and peddle around this with some speed. Children are able to dig and build in the large sand pit exploring how sand feels and can be manipulated. Staff supervise the children as they navigate the obstacle course and climb and balance on the climbing frames. Children learn how to move their arms to create bubbles from large hoops and enjoyed watching them sail away on the breeze. Children's dexterity and hand and eye coordination is developed as they enjoy playing with small world figures, manipulate small cars building traffic jams and roads. They cut, glue and paint using a variety of tools. Staff use 'Birth to three matters' guidance well to provide a good range of physical play experiences for babies and younger children. They enjoy painting with their hands and bodies as they have opportunity to participate in finger painting and doing floor painting, stripped down to their nappies, moving across and around paper. Babies are able to increase their mobility with the use of low level furniture to pull themselves up and begin to walk around. They reach for the colourful mobiles hanging from the ceiling in their room and are learning to express themselves in different ways in order to make their wants and needs known. Facial gestures are interpreted by staff who have an excellent understanding of meeting all children's needs.

Children are encouraged to nap and sleep as required and babies follow their routine from home. This benefits all children as individual sleep patterns are observed.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-planned daily routines. Older children have a very good awareness of how and why we wash our hands and when it is important to do so. For example, before meals and snacks and after messy activities. Younger children develop their understanding through watching others, discussion and through the positive role modelling of the adults. The children are protected from infection through well managed hygiene routines which

are practised by the nursery. For example, the nappy changing routines and disposal, the sick child policy and the consistent good practise by staff as they wear aprons and disposable gloves when changing nappies. Overall the high standard of cleanliness throughout the nursery contributes to the children's good health. Practitioners are well informed about children's health issues and all relevant records and documents are in place. However staff must be vigilant about obtaining parents signatures on all medication consent forms and for each entry concerning accidents. A high percentage of the practitioners hold first aid certificates and are aware of how to administer first aid to the children.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. The nursery takes part in the healthy eating campaign and improvements have been made in the planning and preparation of meals and snacks. Children are provided with varied, nutritious meals in accordance to their needs and any allergies or dietary requirements are complied with. The food provided is ample for the children and there are seconds for those who want it. Older children enjoy a snack bar system which has a positive impact on their play routines. They confidently and independently choose drinks and snacks during this time and can then return to their play. Parents have the choice of providing meals for their child if they wish. Babies are fed in line with personal routines and by consistent carers which helps them relate to an adult and become contented. Children are introduced to new tastes and experiences through meals and activities. They enjoyed tasting healthy food and compiled a chart to depict how they liked the food using smiley, sad or indifferent faces.

Fathers have been able to participate in the healthy eating campaign through a course held in the attached community room called Real Men Can Cook. Here they were taught by a visiting nutritionist about cooking healthy, interesting, fun meals for their children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is paramount to the organisation of the nursery. Practitioners recognise hazards and take positive steps to minimise these. Systematic risk assessments are carried out and all staff share in the responsibility for keeping the children safe. The setting is well planned with lots of space for children to move freely and safely around activities and areas. Well implemented safety and security precautions are in place to promote and safeguard the children's welfare. Practitioners help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe in the nursery as they explain and practise simple procedures such as emergency evacuation and explain the boundaries necessary to keep children safe such as not running inside or throwing sand and toys. Practitioners effectively explain safety to the children in a simple but positive manner aimed at their level of understanding so they can operate safely within their environment. Children have taken part in a road safety topic which has given them a clear insight into being safe on the roads. Children have practised this while playing in the outside area using the zebra crossing and looking both ways before crossing the cycle track. Practitioners follow 'safety in the sun' guidelines in order to protect the children from hot weather and are

in the process of having large sails erected in the outdoor area to provide children with shade while playing. Babies and young children are provided with safe areas to enjoy both inside and outside. Supervision is high and any sleeping children are checked regularly.

Children use a broad range of safe, good quality and developmentally appropriate toys, furniture and equipment. These are well organised throughout the nursery in child height stages to encourage children to become independent and gain safe access to their resources. Children play an active role in their own safety by helping to tidy toys away and notifying an adult if something is broken. Sensitive reminders by staff encourage the children to share in the responsibility for their own safety and that of others. For example, asking a child to pick up pencils from the floor in case someone slips on them.

Children's welfare is safe guarded and promoted through current policies and procedures for the protection of children. Practitioners are knowledgeable about child protection and all procedures are up to date. All staff are encouraged to extend and update their understanding by attending additional training. Their good practise ensures any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, contented and secure throughout the nursery. They confidently access the stimulating and challenging range of activities and are forming secure relationships with the staff and other children. Staff have a sound awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this has a positive effect on children's achievements. Staff plan activities in line with this framework and have gained an efficient knowledge about what children can learn. The foundation stage is used in conjunction with the adjoining nursery where the older children attend a few sessions a week to gain their educational program. This links into Squirrels nursery as many aspects cross over. For example children make connections in their learning as they explore and investigate using natural objects, food, and simple scientific experiments.

Children of all ages and abilities use a range of creative materials such as paint, sticking, collages, playdough, and other messy activities. Children learn through their play experiences and are directly involved and interested in their play. Older children learn about responsibilities and are allowed to make errors, decisions and choices as they select activities and share their play with others.

Children exhibit high levels of confidence and security and this has been achieved by the consistent support and direction of the practitioners. Staff help children resolve their differences when any conflicts arise. They are encouraged to talk about it and find their own solutions. This provides children with tools to become aware of others and negotiate differences.

Children are receptive to the constant praise and encouragement that is provided by staff. This has a clear impact on their self-esteem and encourages them to try new tasks and participate in activities. During a group activity making Fathers Day cards

one child decided not to follow the set process and did it her own way. She exhibited great pride in her individual piece and was praised by staff.

Children are learning to communicate their needs and older children confidently use language to discuss items at group time, take part in imaginative play and retell personal events. Older children confidently describe a process and order of work. For example, talking about how they first have to colour the picture, cut it out and then stick it down on paper.

They took part in an imaginative bus journey where they sang the Wheels on the Bus song, stopped at the shop to buy food and continued to the seaside. The children extended this activity themselves using language to talk about the imaginary things they had seen from the bus i.e. a horse, animals and a man on a motor bike. This is a well managed activity which enables children to express themselves and use their imaginations.

Children develop a concept of counting, sorting, shape, colour and problem solving through the well planned and managed activities on offer. They are beginning to recognise the days of the week and numbers on the daily weather chart and enjoy singing number songs and rhymes.

Babies and younger children use their voices and body language to communicate their wants and needs i.e. pointing to a cup, pushing away a spoon and using smiles and giggles. Adults are skilled at deciphering the non verbal communication and this avoids children becoming frustrated. One child showed how happy she was by dancing uninhibited to the other children's song time. Babies show great delight with the bubble machine as they watch the bubbles blowing around them.

Practitioners enrich the experiences for younger children and babies with heuristic play and treasure baskets. They enjoy touching and feeling especially items which are textured, bright or make a noise.

Attractive displays all around the nursery gives children pride in their work. Low level displays encourages children to talk about their work. i.e. moving on to Ludwick Nursery, bear Hunt, and 3 little pigs. Younger children have their work displayed making attractive cheerful rooms for them to enjoy. Low level mobiles in the baby room encourages babies to focus and reach out for colourful animals hung on elastic.

Staff throughout the nursery make the experiences enjoyable and meaningful for the children which in turn aids their concentration and confidence to participate.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children have access to a meaningful range of resources and activities to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase their awareness of diversity. Children take part in a range of activities of both familiar and unfamiliar festivals and celebrations for example Christmas, Easter and Diwali. Practitioners have very positive attitudes and present themselves as sensitive role models which in turn

helps children relate to others and gain a positive understanding of the needs of others. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and supports the educational program the older children receive at the adjoining nursery. All children are valued and respected as individuals and all their needs are well documented and implemented. Children thrive in their environment where they are engaged and nurtured free from any type of stereotyping. Children are provided with sensitive learning opportunities so their understanding of diversity and the world is fostered.

Practitioners recognise that at some time all children will exhibit a 'special need'. This could be a developmental need or personal need. Not all needs are educational and staff are clearly committed to supporting each and every child in order to meet their needs.

Children have an excellent understanding of the boundaries within the pre-school and respond to direction from adults in a positive fashion. They eagerly respond to the consistent approach followed by all adults and this impacts clearly on children's security and confidence as they develop their understanding and know what is expected of them. Children develop high levels of self-esteem as they are able to resolve differences and gain a strong understanding between right and wrong. This also has the effect of building their managing skills and self reliance. Highly effective behaviour management defuses situations and distracts and engages children in worthwhile activities. Children share in the responsibility for their own behaviour as they learn to listen to others, share and wait turns and being kind to our friends. Practitioners are excellent role models for the children, creating a calm, positive, fun and interesting environment in which they thrive. Children are heard to use the same positive language in their play and discussions with each other. For example, two boys wanting the same bike negotiate turns. Children also play an active role in keeping their environment clean and tidy. Older children help at tidy up time and work cooperatively together carrying a large box of toys they have filled. Staff have high expectations for all the children and are consistent in their behaviour management.

An excellent partnership with parents contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging, security and well being. Parents play an active role in their child's care and a two way sharing of information is encouraged with the use of daily diaries. Parents are invited to regular open days and events, Staff are extremely approachable and friendly, making parents feel secure and at ease, confident with the care provided for their child. Parents are fully informed about their child's progression and achievements and their involvement impacts greatly on the children's good health, safety, care and learning. The community room involves parents and children from the local area with aspects concerning parenting skills, health advice, healthy eating, reading and sharing books and language skills for babies. Highly varied and innovative methods impacts greatly on children's learning and well being.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is greatly enhanced by the exceptional quality of organisation and the outstanding leadership and management of the nursery as a whole. Close links to the adjoining nursery are very strong and a positive asset to Squirrels Nursery. This benefits the children when they are ready to move across as they have already become familiar with the school, children and staff through their time spent in their educational sessions at Ludwick Nursery and with linked activities between the two schools.

The manager and deputy are continually enhancing their own knowledge through extensive training and are actively involved with the local community organising the outreach services running the Positive Beginnings group from the community room.

The management team are responsible for all aspects of the nursery including staff supervision and employment, ratio's and deployment, operational plan, staff training and qualifications. All staff have a considerable knowledge of the National Standards which they are committed to applying throughout the nursery. High regard for the well being of the children, their group sizes, adult support and well planned activities, contribute to children's well being, enjoyment and achievements. The manager and deputy manager work extremely well together and have built a positive, motivated, and dedicated staff team. The organisation of staff across the nursery includes a sensitive mix between young and mature staff and enables them to share experiences and enrich and promote the well being and experiences provided for the children.

The premises are very well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is effectively arranged to maximize the play opportunities for children. The outdoor area is shared with Ludwick Nursery school. This is managed effectively with both schools contributing to the extensive, imaginative and safe environment the children enjoy.

Highly effective organisation of all records and documents ensures children's welfare and enables parents to play an active role in their child's care. All staff are committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement of their practice. They regularly monitor and improve the quality of their care as part of an accredited quality assurance scheme and through the daily organisation of the nursery. The high quality of the provision means that the nursery meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection an outings policy has been produced which clearly shows the procedures and care taken when any outings are conducted. All staff are made aware of this policy and how to implement it for the safety and security of the children. Practitioners now have a secure knowledge of extending opportunities for the children to operate independently within their environment. They step back and give the children time to try things for themselves such as putting on their own coats and shoes. Children independently access chosen activities, pour their own drinks and serve themselves snacks from the snack bar.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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):

- ensure parents signatures are obtained for each medication consent and for each entry in the accident book

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