

# Little Fishes Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	402043
<b>Inspection date</b>	25 January 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Sarah Johnson

<b>Setting Address</b>	St Mary's Church Centre, Churchgate Street, Old Harlow, Essex, CM17 0JR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 432135
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Little Fishes Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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?

Little Fishes Pre-School opened in 1992. It is managed by a voluntary management committee. The pre-school operates from the main hall within St Mary's Church Centre in Old Harlow, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open from 09.30 to 12.15 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor area.

There are currently 26 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a number of children who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is currently working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in a clean and well-maintained environment where staff follow very good health and hygiene procedures. For example, children's health is enhanced by the effective food handling procedures followed by staff. Food is prepared in a very clean kitchen area. Staff consistently wash their hands before preparing food and ensure surfaces used for serving food are covered with hygienic table cloths which are consistently wiped clean with antibacterial spray. Children benefit from a healthy range of snacks. For example, they sit together at tables to enjoy pieces of fresh banana and they confidently pour their own drinks from a choice of water or milk from a jug. Children can access additional drinks of water from a jug throughout the session, ensuring they remain well hydrated. Children's dietary needs are effectively met as the staff gather information about individual dietary requirements before children attend the setting. Children are learning how to be healthy as they spontaneously talk to staff about how drinking milk and eating fruit is good for their bodies. They also enjoy regular cooking activities where they learn about cooking healthy foods such as vegetable broth.

Children are protected from the spread of infection as they are encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet and before sitting down to have a snack. Older children manage their hand washing routines independently, rolling up their sleeves in preparation. They help themselves to squirts of liquid soap and wipe their hands dry on individual paper towels. Fun posters are displayed near the sinks to remind children to wash their hands when they access the toilet independently during the sessions. Children are well cared for if they become unwell or have an accident. There is a clear policy in place for supporting children who are unwell, which refers to clear exclusion periods for common childhood illnesses and is shared with parents. Children benefit as there is always one member of staff present who holds a current first aid qualification. Children experience good continuity of care because accidents are clearly recorded in the accident book and confidentially shared with parents. Children's health is promoted further as staff implement good procedures if they need to administer medication to children and the required consents and records are consistently signed by parents.

Children have lots of energy and enjoy regular opportunities to develop their physical strength and co-ordination, contributing to a healthy lifestyle. For example, they enjoy doing star jumps and controlling their arm movements when waving the parachute. Their spatial awareness is good as they run around freely in the spacious hall, swerving to avoid each other and freezing when the music stops. In addition, they enjoy regular opportunities to exercise in the fresh air when playing in the small outdoor play area or visiting the nearby park and field.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an bright and airy environment that is safe and well maintained. The setting operates from a large spacious hall which is decorated throughout with colourful displays of the children's creative work. The layout of the room is well organised to maximise the space available, with several sliding partitions which are used effectively to create defined areas for different types of activity. As a result, children who are concentrating on quieter activities are not distracted. Easily accessible and clean toilets are provided, as staff check these for cleanliness throughout sessions. Children busy themselves as they freely make choices from a wide range

of quality toys and resources. The staff are vigilant in ensuring that resources are rotated regularly and happily provide additional resources to meet the children's interests and extend their play.

Staff are motivated in providing a very safe environment for children by completing thorough daily risk assessments and taking positive steps to minimise any risks identified. Children's safety is promoted as they are effectively supervised as they flow freely between indoor and outdoor play. Children play safely in secure premises. For example, staff ensure the main door is locked during sessions and the identity of any visitors is ascertained and recorded in the visitor book. Children are protected further as staff follow highly secure procedures when children are collected at the end of the session. For example, parents are asked to fill in the collection book when someone different will be collecting their child and staff ensure children are released one by one to their parents. Children develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe as they are fully involved in practising fire drills on a regular basis. In addition, they listen to stories about calling the emergency services and talk about keeping themselves safe around people they do not know.

Children are safeguarded as several staff have attended safeguarding children training and they fully understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. There are clear written procedures in place which support staff when they need to follow up any concerns or make a referral.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely happy and settled in the warm and friendly environment of the pre-school. They are welcomed by highly enthusiastic and warm staff when they arrive at the setting, helping them to feel confident when separated from their parents. They are quick to engage in the activities that staff set out for them and respond very positively when they are invited to join each other for a friendly group registration. They confidently answer to their names, as staff take time to say 'good morning' to each of the children. Staff have a lovely rapport with children and are actively engaged with children at all times, encouraging them to get involved and to try new things. Children particularly delight in sharing books and singing songs and rhymes with the staff, eagerly joining in with familiar actions and words. As they become increasingly articulate and confident they actively contribute at story time, predicting what will come next as a familiar book is read to them.

Younger children are appropriately supported when they join the pre-school because staff are dedicated to developing a thorough understanding of their interests, needs and starting points. For example, they actively facilitate discussion with parents and carers and carry out regular observations of individual children during their initial sessions. Children reap the benefits as their parents are actively encouraged to stay with them during their first sessions, until they are completely comfortable and settled.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit as staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and frequently source relevant training to build on their knowledge. For example, two members of staff are currently completing training relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children benefit from a well-planned environment that provides them with a broad range of learning opportunities and a good balance of play they

initiate themselves and activities which are led by the staff. Children respond well to working in small groups with their key person and this ensures staff can provide good levels of support and tailor the activities to meet the needs of individual children. For example, staff make good use of appropriate open-ended questioning to extend and consolidate children's thinking. Staff support children's behaviour effectively to ensure an effective environment for learning. For example, children's time is put to good use when they are waiting to wash their hands as staff make the most of the opportunity to sing some number rhymes.

Children's progress is facilitated further by effective planning documentation which clearly shows the learning intentions identified for each activity. Assessment files are collated for each child including examples of their work and a checklist of the stepping stones, which is highlighted and dated to map children's progress. Children benefit from staff who understand their individual developmental needs as they record daily observations of children's achievements and any areas which would benefit from additional support. These assessments are used to inform future planning for individual children and as a result, children are supported to move on to the next stage in their learning.

Children are making sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first hand experiences in an interesting environment. They enjoy exploring a range of tactile experiences as they use spoons to scoop up spoonfuls of cornflour mixture and observe as it slowly changes from liquid to solid. They investigate aspects of the living world as they talk about plants needing sunshine and water to grow. Children experience good opportunities to use everyday technology to support their learning. Staff support them to use the toaster at snack time and most children competently use a mouse and keyboard to control a simple programme on the laptop computer. Children enjoy a range of physical activities that help them to develop their skills when using small apparatus, tools and equipment. They safely use scissors during craft activities and show good control when using a knife to spread butter on toast. They begin to develop an awareness of the effect of exercise on their bodies as they listen to their heart beating faster and talk about feeling hot after running around.

Children are learning about connections and relationships in numbers, shapes and measures. They use mathematical language as they talk about sticking more or less legs on their picture of an octopus. More able children are able to determine how many more legs they need to make an octopus with eight legs. Children are beginning to recognise numerals. For example, they count the number of dots they have thrown on the dice and point out the corresponding numeral from a selection which are chalked on the ground. They explore the concept of capacity as they fill containers with dried pasta and use language such as 'full' and 'empty'. Children enjoy being creative, expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, dance and imaginative play. They use realistic resources to support their role play, which is often based on their first hand experiences. For example, they play alongside others as they dress up in uniforms and pretend to be fire fighters. Children introduce narrative when playing with 'Small world' characters. They establish imaginary scenarios about characters who feel unwell and use a small ambulance to transport them to the hospital. Children enjoy painting freely with paintbrushes on the easel and using corrugated card and brown paint to represent a tree that they observed whilst out on a walk.

Children kindly ask for help when they cannot manage to pull the zip on their coats, demonstrating their confidence when linking up with others for support and guidance. They are developing their ability to manage tasks independently as they pour their own drinks, help to tidy up resources and find a cloth to mop up their spilt drink. Children are encouraged to develop a strong sense of self and to value others as they draw pictures of their faces and talk

positively about their similarities and differences. Children are developing their competencies in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Most children recognise their own names in print when finding their name card at the snack table and children attempt to write their name onto their creative work with support from the staff. They enjoy an increasing range of books in the comfortable and inviting book area and show an interest in new words. For example, they ask the meaning of the word 'emergency'. Children are beginning to hear and say the initial sounds in words as they look around the room to find objects which begin with the 'letter of the week'.

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

The provision is good.

Children play in an inclusive environment where staff value each child's individuality. Children's welfare is promoted as staff have attended relevant training courses to develop their awareness of equality issues such as promoting race equality and inclusion in child care settings. Children feel valued and are developing a good sense of belonging. This is because staff ensure that children's individual needs are met and that they have their achievements acknowledged through consistent praise and encouragement. For example, children eagerly seek out staff to show them the photographs which they bring in from home. Staff provide good support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, placing emphasis on working in partnership with their parents. Effective intervention strategies ensure individual plans for children with additional needs are monitored by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and include clear targets to ensure children are supported to progress. Children benefit further as staff have completed relevant ongoing training including courses relating to writing individual education plans and implementing the code of practice.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are learning to value diversity and are developing an understanding of the wider community because staff are keen to talk about cultural traditions with children and plan activities which explore a range of festivals. For example, they learn about Chinese New Year when making traditional lanterns and make traditional 'diyas' from clay to celebrate Diwali. Children are keen to help one another and they play harmoniously, side by side throughout the day. They learn right from wrong through careful explanations and the praise and support that they continually receive from staff helps them to develop their self-esteem. For example, children delight in receiving stickers when they have been kind or helpful to others and proudly show these to their parents at the end of the session.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children enjoy continuity of care because staff work closely with parents to ensure that individual needs are met. Very good quality written and verbal information is given to parents when they first start and the flexible settling-in procedure ensures that the needs of the family are met. For example, parents learn about the daily routine through a book of meaningful photographs showing key aspects of the daily routine. Staff take time to talk to parents about their children, gaining a clear understanding of children's starting points, interests, likes and dislikes. This effective exchange of information continues as staff use daily diaries to share any significant information about children's achievements and care routines whilst they are at the setting. Although the staff are aware of the requirement to keep a log of any complaints, children's welfare is not fully promoted as the written complaints policy does not fully reflect this and does not include the current address for Ofsted as the regulator.

Parents are very well informed regarding the Foundation Stage and how their children are progressing. This is achieved successfully through daily discussion with parents and regular

newsletters which highlight the main themes being covered in the planning. In addition, parents routinely receive reports outlining their children's progress in each of the areas of learning and they are invited in every half term to share their children's assessment records. This ensures that parents have the opportunity to become involved in their children's learning and consequently, children's learning is enhanced.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The management and organisation of the setting is effective in ensuring that children receive very good quality care. Children are safeguarded because there are good recruitment and vetting procedures in place. Staff are well qualified and they understand that children must not be left alone with adults who have not been suitably vetted. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and are effectively implemented in order to promote very good outcomes for children. The regular use of staff appraisals ensures that practice remains of a high standard and that staff training needs are effectively catered for. Staff are well deployed enables them to be actively engaged with the children. As a result, children receive good levels of attention and direct support.

The daily hours of attendance are accurately recorded for both children and staff. These records show that the setting complies with the conditions of registration, which contributes positively to children's safety and ability to actively take part in all activities. All other required documentation is in place and maintained to a good standard. For example, a comprehensive selection of written policies and procedures are in place and are regularly reviewed by the staff and committee to ensure they continue to reflect current practice.

The leadership and management is good. Children make good progress because staff work effectively as a strong team and they have a clear vision for providing good quality nursery education. However, opportunities to improve teaching and children's learning are not always maximised as systems for monitoring and evaluating the provision are not fully developed and are generally based around informal discussion. Staff are enthusiastic and well motivated. For example, they participate in ongoing professional development training and use the knowledge and skills that they gain to build upon their good practice. Staff are provided with an informative staff handbook when they join the setting, ensuring they are clear on the policies and procedures and have a clear idea of their individual responsibilities. As a result, children enjoy sessions which run very smoothly.

Overall children's needs are met.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to formalise a system for staff appraisals and to update the early years qualifications held by some staff. Children benefit as staff now complete annual staff appraisals to reflect on their practice and identify any training requirements. Children are cared for by knowledgeable staff as most members of staff hold up-to-date qualifications which are relevant to their role.

The provider was also asked to review the risk assessment procedures to ensure shared areas remain safe and to update some aspects of the child protection policy. Children's safety is no longer compromised as the staff conduct thorough daily risk assessments covering indoor and outdoor areas. The child protection policy now includes a clear statement for dealing with

allegations made against staff and relevant contact numbers for referring any concerns, which further promotes the welfare of children.

At the last nursery education inspection, the provider agreed to develop the planning documentation and to provide opportunities for children to increase their calculating skills. Children's learning is now further supported as there is good coverage of all six areas of learning within the planning and the short term planning includes clear links to the stepping stones and highlights suggestions for adapting each activity to meet the needs of different children. Children are offered a good range of opportunities to develop their calculating skills and as a result, older children are able to confidently determine that they have one less when they take a bear away from a set.

### **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):

- update the written complaints procedure to reflect current requirements including the correct address for Ofsted as the regulator.

#### **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 further systems for monitoring and evaluating the provision for nursery education to ensure strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning are built upon.

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)