

Railway Children Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	122503
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Inspector	Amanda Jane Tyson
Setting Address	Station House, Bunbury Way, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 4JP
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Registered person	Nicola Johnson
Type of inspection	Integrated
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 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 Railway Children Kindergarten opened in 1998 and is privately owned. The kindergarten has sole use of the ground floor of a detached property which was previously the ticket office for Epsom Downs railway station. It is situated in a quiet residential area and serves families from Epsom Downs, Ewell, Tadworth and Banstead.

The kindergarten operates from Monday - Friday, during term time only and provides sessional care from 09:00 - 12:15, with an optional lunch club until 12:45 and an extended session on Monday and Wednesday covering the school day. Children have access to three areas, the main play room, a quiet room and an art room. There is a secure outside play area and car parking facilities.

The kindergarten accepts children from the age of two years to under five years. There are currently 22 children on roll, of these, 13 are in receipt of funding for nursery education. The setting supports children with physical and/or learning disabilities.

There is a staff team of four, plus an occasional assistant. Three staff have a recognised early years qualification, and three have up to date first aid certificates.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very clean environment and staff practise good hygiene standards. Children are reminded to wash their hands before participating in cooking activities and taking their snack break. They consistently wash their hands properly using liquid soap and dry them on disposable paper towels. Children understand why this is important. This, along with the settings policy on the attendance of children who are unwell, helps to prevent the spread of infection.

Children's health and medical needs are supported and promoted through good record keeping and by skilled and experienced staff who know the children well. Exceptionally good arrangements for the settling-in of new children ensure a smooth transition from home to nursery for all children. This is particularly pertinent for those who are experiencing parental separation for the first time. Children and parents visit a number of times before a gradual leaving process begins. September admissions, when there is usually a number of new children, are staggered to enable staff to provide individual support. Staff use the settling-in period and the information gathered from parents to plan a welcoming first day for children, for instance by setting up an activity or resources of particular interest to that child. The procedure for children to self-register with their parents in the morning, to settle them into an activity, and to say goodbye helps children feel secure; they understand that parents will return.

Children's health history is comprehensively documented, for example, allergy information includes details of the signs and symptoms of onset and what action is required at specific times. Most staff first aid trained and named individuals have completed specialist training to enable them to administer epi-pens should the need arise. Parents provide written consent to enable staff to apply first aid, and to seek emergency treatment where necessary. Accidents and administered medication are recorded and the entries signed by parents. This ensures appropriate care is continued when children go home.

Snack time is very well organised. An informal café style arrangement enables children to choose when they want to take a break. They enjoy fruit and savoury snacks, and a drink of water and/or milk whilst engaging in delightful social conversations. This is encouraging children to adopt long term healthy eating habits. Children have opportunities to play outside each morning, but whilst the outdoor play area offers a rich learning environment, there are less opportunities, particularly for older or more robust children, to practise climbing and balancing skills. Children do benefit from fairly regular short walks to collect nature items or to watch the trains, but opportunities for them to run around and manoeuvre bikes well is restricted by space, particularly because they all go out together. Nevertheless, planning shows that children enjoy activities such as music and movement and they learn how their body reacts after exercise, for example, by feeling their pulse.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises is secure and well maintained. The risk of children going missing, or from strangers being able to access the premises is well minimised by tight door security, a robust registration and collection of children procedure, and high levels of vigilance maintained by staff. Nevertheless, staff are well prepared to act swiftly in the event of a lost child. The step by step

procedure is consistently reinforced during induction procedures and team meetings. Clearly defined play areas such as graphics, role play and messy play, along with high quality resources and exciting activity presentation provides a welcoming and stimulating environment to children.

Staff conduct a daily risk assessment to the premises to ensure children's safety. This includes checking that toys and equipment are in good condition, that the outdoor play area is free from hazards, and that radiators are maintained at a safe temperature. Electrical sockets are all covered to prevent children 'investigating' and there is a strictly adhered to procedure that prevents staff from drinking hot drinks during the session. Regular fire drills ensure that children know what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency. The setting are fully aware of the changes made to fire safety regulations, for example, one staff attended specific training and now takes on the role of 'fire marshal'.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by staff who demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of child development, of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and the procedure to follow if they become concerned about a child. However, the procedure for recording existing injuries to children is inconsistent and therefore less helpful as a tool to support the monitoring of children's welfare, but also of their development.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children aged under three years are making excellent developmental progress. They benefit greatly from the wealth of activities that encourage sensory experimentation and encourage the use of imagination. For example, children 'get messy' with gloop, mix sand, water, glitter and other liquids such as oil, shampoo and ice together. This exposes children to different texture; runny and cold, scratchy, smooth, hard and soft. These young children benefit from planned small group times, where activities, discussions and stories are specifically pitched at their age and stage of development. This encourages children's confidence, particularly in speaking out within a group situation. The small group setting is highly conducive to supporting young children's sense of belonging. Staff spend time getting to know the children and supporting them as they attempt new challenges. Activities are carefully planned to enable the full inclusion of all children, regardless of their age or stage of ability. The integration of two year-olds with four year-olds within this setting is very successful.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making mostly excellent progress through the stepping stones to the early learning goals. The reason for this is because curriculum planning very much begins with the child. Staff record instantaneous observations of the children during the session, use this information to inform assessments and then to identify next steps for learning for each child. Activities are then planned to incorporate all of this information. Whilst planning identifies a theme, it is broad and not restrictive in any way. It's prominence is mainly within role play and a focussed daily creative activity. For example, during the theme of Dinosaurs, role play was set up as a cave and children made three dimensional Dinosaur models. During the month of December, children play in Santa's workshop, make decorations and participate in related cooking activities. They still have access to the all early learning goals through the well resourced activity areas.

Opportunities for children to access wider world experiences, science and technology are outstanding. They create differences using colour paddles, experiment with magnets and look

closely at objects through magnifiers. Children are becoming skilled in using a newly acquired digital camera to record their achievements, use torches, the computer and audio equipment independently. Children made their own lava lamps by mixing food colouring, glitter and small pieces of fruit with oil and soda liquid in a plastic bottle. This led to their learning of how to cause the activation of colour and pattern as they released gases by taking off the lid. Children squeal with delight as they navigate the programmable robot around the room. They build and design using recyclable materials, such as boxes and tubes and with real balsa wood, hammers and nails. Children's learning of the natural and living world is brought to life as seeds and bulbs are planted and they watch them grow, and they monitored the growth of a frog, from the three stages of spawn, tadpole and frog. Children take part in a wide range of activities that introduce them to diversity within their immediate and wider world.

Mathematical challenges are skilfully woven into all activities. Children count and work out practical number problems. Correctly sequenced numerals are imprinted into playdough using special tools, children independently organise small objects into groups of numbers and correctly place them onto matching cards. They weigh cooking ingredients using scales, measure their models, and when they go out into the garden, park their bikes in numbered areas. Children explore weight, volume and capacity through regular access to water, and through the wide variety of accessible resources for them to pick up and handle. Younger children's knowledge of basic shapes is developing well and older children are beginning to differentiate between a square and a cube.

Children are become confident and articulate communicators. Older children write their names clearly and are progressing very well in their use of phonics; some children are already at the stage of being able to work out simple words with support. Children are keen to write within play. In Santa's workshop they write pretend present lists, use pencils and notepads outdoors and make frequent visits to the well resourced graphics area. Skilled story telling techniques and the regular use of props keep children enthralled. The setting is well resourced with high quality books which are sometimes selected by children and taken to staff to read to them individually. However, children do not choose to spend time in the book area, and this may well be because it is not particularly cosy and welcoming, for example, there is limited comfortable seating.

The themed role play corner inspires children to act out their real and imaginary experiences, they have open access to art and craft resources and tools, and make good use of these to produce models, self interpretations, for example, a stunning map of the nursery created by a four year-old. Nativity play preparations are underway and children are showing delightful signs of 'budding performers'. Singing is tuneful and group music and movement activities are regular.

Children demonstrate high levels of independence. They manage their own personal care with skill and use small tools, such as scissors and whole-punchers competently and safely. The organisation of the setting, with open access to resources is mostly conducive to enabling highly worthwhile, child initiated and undisturbed play. This is very well demonstrated by the way in which children access the graphics area to make props and such like to support play in other areas, and by the provision of a 'café' so that they can choose when they are ready to take a break. However, the arrangements for outdoor play conflict with this, by contrast children have to stop what they are doing because outdoor playtime is determined by staff. Furthermore, because the whole group go out together, the area becomes crowded and therefore less productive.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's voices their ideas and thoughts are extremely well valued and respected. This is superbly demonstrated by the wealth of captured comments made by the children that are displayed on postcards within activity areas. Children are empowered by the way that staff include the children in solving practical problems, for example, when objects will not stay stuck to the outside wall. Children's art work is prominently displayed and their high levels of self esteem and confidence is well demonstrated as they proudly show adults and their peers.

Children learn about immediate and wider world differences through exciting activities and interesting circle time discussions. During the religious festival period of Diwali they learned how a Hindu home is decorated with lights and incense, and how rangoli patterns are made from powdered glass. As Christmas approaches, the children are enjoying learning the story of the birth of Jesus through their re-enactment of the Nativity. After listening to a story showing pictures of an African girl carrying fruit on her head, children thought about how difficult this might be by practising with a bean-bag. The setting is richly resourced with positive images of diversity; children connect national costumes to the correct ethnic figure, they see posters on the wall showing children reading Braille and being enabled with glasses and hearing aids. Activities are well adapted to enable the inclusion of children with specific needs and those aged under three years.

Staff constantly praise children throughout the session for 'good listening', 'good waiting', and for 'being helpful'. Children use common courtesies, such as please, thank you and excuse me. Older children are exceptionally kind and supportive of younger children, for instance, helping them to access the café. Children share and take turns good naturedly. Systems, such as helping themselves to a wrist band before entering the role play, remind children of the rule for 'only four at a time', which ensures productive play. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are extremely warmly welcomed into the setting every day and high levels of communication keep them well informed about children's care and well-being. The setting's prospectus is very well put together to provide a clear picture of what it has to offer. Parents are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the setting's regulatory responsibilities, such as how to make a complaint, because it is well described in written information. Comprehensive written agreements and signed consent forms clarify their wishes regarding the care of children.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for nursery education is good. They are well informed about the Foundation Stage and how children are helped to make progress through the stepping stones of the early learning goals. The learning theme is promoted through newsletters, daily verbal communication and children's prominently displayed work. Parents regularly contribute towards children's learning by sharing their knowledge and skills, for example, an animated introduction to dinosaurs and their prehistoric habitats from an author of children's history books. Some parents regularly access the open door policy to discuss their child's individual progress and development towards the early learning goals. These parents know what children's individual learning targets are and therefore able to extend learning support within the home. However, with no formal system for parental consultations, many do not take up this opportunity. This means that they do not know what their child's identified learning targets are for that term.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by a consistent team of experienced, well qualified and dedicated staff. Robust recruitment, vetting and induction procedures are in place and children benefit from the wealth of external training that staff regularly attend. Most recently, staff have updated their first aid certificates and are participating in the intense programme of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) workshops in preparation for the September 2008 implementation.

In the main, very good use is made of the available space and resources. This is best demonstrated by the clearly defined play and learning areas. However, although the outdoor play area is exceptionally well set up, not enough use is made of it throughout the session and this impacts on all areas of learning. Staff deploy themselves exceptionally well to provide children with a good balance of adult support and opportunities to explore and investigate independently.

Leadership and management of nursery education is good. Management work closely with, and act upon the advice of, the early years partnership. They attend regular meetings with other local providers where ideas are shared. Their commitment towards continual improvement inspires and motivates staff. Very regular curriculum planning meetings ensure that the close-knit team all fully understand their individual roles and responsibilities and work cohesively together. Overall, there are very good systems in place for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum planning based upon vigilant observation and comprehensive record keeping. Weaker areas are mostly identified and prompt action is taken to improve the outcomes for children. Management take full responsibility for reviewing children's records and curriculum planning every day. They ensure that the information gathered is used to guide 'next day' and future planning, and to set individual learning and development targets for every child. Team meetings are regular and an effective appraisal system ensures staff's skills and interests are maximised.

The written confidentiality policy clearly sets out the procedure for sharing with parents only records relating to their child. However, the way that behavioural incidents between two children are recorded compromises this. This appears to be an administrative oversight. With this exception, records and documentation that are required and recommended for the safe and efficient management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained to a very good standard, and appropriately shared with parents. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection for care the setting have put in place a robust procedure for checking that the contents of the first aid box are regularly checked; they have improved hand drying facilities within the cloakroom and made effective changes to the organisation of the outdoor play area, which has drastically reduced the numbers of accidents sustained to children.

The last inspection for nursery education recommended increasing opportunities for parents to be involved in children's learning. Parents now regularly contribute their knowledge and skills by spending time in the setting. They have open access to children's progress and development records, but further recommendations are raised.

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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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):

- ensure a consistent procedure for recording existing injuries to children
- make sure that parents only have access to written information about their own children

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):

- evaluate and improve the arrangements for outdoor play, and create a more comfortable book corner.
- improve how information regarding children's individual next steps of learning is shared with parents.

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