



Little Stars

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY271568
Inspection date	15 June 2005
Inspector	Rachel Edwards

Setting Address	The Swindon College Nursery, North Star Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1DY
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Registered person	Swindon College
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?

Little Stars Nursery opened in 2003. It operates from premises on the site of North Star College, Swindon.

The nursery serves the students and staff of the college, and the surrounding community. There are currently 46 children on roll, including 18 funded three and four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with special needs.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday 50 weeks of the year. Sessions are from Monday to Thursday from 08.00 to 17.30, and on Friday from 08.00 to 17.00. There are eight staff employed at the nursery; seven have early years qualifications and two are currently on training programmes. The nursery is an accredited setting to use Tinytalk UK baby sign language.

The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a warm, clean and welcoming environment. Children are protected from illness and infection as staff follow the clear and highly effective procedures, for example when changing nappies and preparing food. Children gain an excellent understanding of the importance of personal hygiene and even the very youngest children are encouraged to become independent in visiting the toilet, washing hands and blowing noses. Parents are given helpful information and advice on a range of children's health issues such as healthy eyes and teeth or how to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables and this has a very positive impact on children's well-being.

Children enjoy and benefit from a varied and highly nutritious diet. They talk about healthy eating and choose and help prepare fruit each day for their snack. Children's enjoyment of mealtimes is enhanced by their involvement in preparing some foods, laying and clearing the table and by the lively conversation with their friends and staff. Older children are able to help themselves to water throughout the day, whilst younger children are regularly offered drinks.

Children develop a positive attitude to exercise through daily physical play. They use a range of equipment outside such as balls and wheeled toys and enjoy running and rolling down the grassy bank but there is no sufficiently challenging climbing equipment, especially for the older children. The outside area is not effectively used to help children develop in all areas of learning. All children regularly enjoy using the soft play room, which helps them develop strength and control of their movements.

Children are happy and settled throughout the nursery. Babies are able to follow their normal routines for sleep; 2-year-olds are encouraged to sleep or play quietly after lunch and there are good arrangements for older children to rest if they need to during the day. The effective key worker system allows children to build close relationships with staff and helps them feel emotionally secure. This is particularly apparent for children under three years.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from hazards and accidents in a very safe and closely supervised environment. They begin to recognise potential dangers and learn how to protect themselves from harm. They are well supported in using equipment such as sharp knives; learn about road safety on walks and talk about possible dangers from approaching strangers.

Children use a good range of toys and equipment that are always appropriate to their age and ability. The soft play area allows the younger children to be more adventurous and develop their physical skills in safe surroundings.

Children are very well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection issues and follow the nursery procedures well.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at nursery, they are happy, settled and have good relationships with staff and each other. They make good progress because staff are skilled and effectively use early years guidance such as the Birth to three framework and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage to provide good quality care and education. The environment is welcoming to children and their families who are warmly greeted each day. There is a relaxed and homely feel to the setting. For example, there is a comfortable and private area for mothers to feed their babies; large sofas in the youngest children's rooms allow staff and children to snuggle up for stories and bottle feeding and the older children have access to their safe kitchen where they can wash up dishes at the low sinks or help themselves to drinks, which greatly increases their confidence and independence.

Children are eager to join in with a good variety of interesting and enjoyable activities. Singing and music form an important part of each day and there is a well resourced music area. All children benefit from exploring sensory experiences such as handling and smelling fresh fish before painting and printing with them. Early communication skills are very well developed, all staff are trained to use baby sign language and staff and children throughout the nursery, routinely use this together with spoken language. This helps children, including those with special needs, to more readily express their thoughts and needs.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan a broad and interesting curriculum which makes children enthusiastic and eager to learn. The environment is attractively organised with exciting areas that capture their imagination, such as the small room transformed by staff and children into an 'under the sea' area. Here children dig in the sand for shells, pretend to be chased by sharks and look for buried treasure in the chest. Children play co-operatively, reminding each other of the nursery rules as they add their name to the list of only three allowed to play in certain areas.

They use numbers spontaneously in play and count well, although more able children

are not sufficiently encouraged to begin to add and subtract and solve simple problems. Children recognise their names with ease and enjoy lots of singing and rhyming activities that help develop their early language skills well. However more able children are not sufficiently encouraged to hear initial sounds in words and begin to link these to letters, nor to further develop their early writing skills in meaningful ways, for example by routinely writing their names on work.

There is a good balance between child and adult led activities which allows children to learn at their own pace. Children are able to self select from a very good range of resources which develops their independence well. However at times, art work is overly directed which prevents children from freely developing their creativity.

Children's progress in all areas of learning is recorded and regularly shared with parents. However this information is not always effectively used to help staff plan activities that will appropriately challenge all children. Regular newsletters keep parents well informed and include useful ideas for continuing children's learning at home, which parents and children enjoy.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed and fully involved in the setting. Staff respect children's individuality and work closely with parents to make sure that each child's needs are well met. Children of all ages are confident to explore their surroundings and readily turn to staff for comfort or support. They develop a strong sense of their own identity and of being part of the group as staff encourage and praise their achievements. They eagerly help with routine tasks such as collecting the post, caring for the nursery pets, vacuuming after lunch or loading the dishwasher.

The children have good opportunities to learn about themselves and the wider world and to become sensitive to the needs of others through well planned activities, outings and visitors to the nursery. They regularly enjoy exploring other cultures through stories, food, music and art. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Children behave very well. Young children are well supported in learning to share and take turns. Older children respond well to the clear and consistent guidance of staff and learn to amicably resolve their own conflicts, for example, a four-year-old suggests using a timer to decide when it is his turn in the sandpit.

The very good partnership with parents has a significant impact on children's progress and well being. Staff and parents have a warm and open relationship where information about the children is routinely shared so that children's needs and interests are well catered for. Children's health, safety and learning benefit from parent's involvement in projects such as healthy eating, raising money for good causes or buying chickens for the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the strong ethos of continuing improvement and development within the nursery. The well qualified and skilful staff work well as a team and are committed to ongoing training. All staff regularly reflect and review their practice. Staff receive an effective induction process and regular performance appraisals. The management team work regularly with the staff and children to ensure that the clearly written policies and procedures are consistently applied throughout the nursery and this is reflected in the good standard of care. The nursery meets the needs of the range of children who attend well.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff meet regularly to discuss planning and the children's progress. Resources are well organised and the rooms arranged to provide a dynamic learning environment, which motivates children to learn. Staff value the support of the Early Years Partnership advisory teacher. They have identified areas for improvement, for example, staff have recently attended training on the teaching of phonics and plan to introduce this next term.

Improvements since the last inspection

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- develop the outside space so that it can be used by all children to provide a stimulating environment for enjoyment and routine learning

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):

- ensure that the more able children are sufficiently challenged to develop reading, writing and problem-solving skills
- ensure that the organisation of craft activities allows the development of children's own sense of creativity and imagination

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