

Early Learners Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	303434
Inspection date	09 October 2007
Inspector	Joan Isabel Madden
Setting Address	20 Deacon Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 6ED
Telephone number	0151 424 2987
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Registered person	Early Learners Nursery Limited
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?

Early Learners Nursery and After School Care was registered in 1985 and is situated in Widnes Town Centre. It operates from the main building that accommodates the youngest children in two rooms on the ground floor and the school children in two rooms on the first floor. There is separate, purpose built accommodation for the pre-school children. All children have access to a secure outdoor play area situated between these two buildings. The provision is registered to provide care for a maximum of 102 children, 76 children are aged under five years in the nursery, and 26 children aged between three and eight years in the out of school club. Care is also offered to the school children during the school holidays. The provision is open Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 18.00 all year round excluding public holidays. It is a privately owned limited company.

There are currently 58 children aged from three months to under five years on roll in the nursery. Of these, 13 children receive funding for early education. There are 29 children aged from four years to 10 years in the out of school club. Children come from a wide catchment area. The provision currently supports children with disabilities. A total of 15 members of staff are

employed to work with the children. Of these, 14 hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 3 or above and one member of staff is working towards a level 3 qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Effective procedures are followed by the staff to protect the children from illness and infection. The premises are clean and well maintained. Staff clean up throughout the day when necessary. Sensible hygiene measures are employed in caring for the babies. Flannels used on babies are washed after each use and they have their own cot sheets. Documentation arising from environmental health visits confirm the provision is meeting their requirements. Staff have relevant qualifications in food hygiene and are conscientious in preparing food to ensure it does not pose a health risk. Children understand the need for simple good health and hygiene practices. They wash their hands before eating and as part of the toileting routine. They wear aprons for messy activities and whilst eating. All children brush their teeth after lunch. Children are treated appropriately for minor injuries, as staff are qualified in first aid and there is a fully stocked first aid box. Documentation relating to accidents and medication is correctly maintained helping to underpin sensible procedures. High priority is put upon the children developing their physical skills and a healthy life style. All children play out regularly in the large safe outdoor area, where the fencing can be rearranged to suit the requirements of different age groups. Pre-school children enjoy riding wheeled toys and in so learn to negotiate space. They take part in races and individuals take responsibility for starting and judging the races. Children have opportunities to develop other physical skills using a wide range of equipment.

Nutritious food and discussion promotes the children's good health. Menus reflect that children benefit from healthy meals and snacks. On inspection day children enjoyed a breakfast of cereals and milk and a lunch of tuna, sweet corn, pitta bread and rice. The appropriate constituency of food is prepared for the babies. Parents provide the babies' bottles. Water is available to the children at all times. Children have their health and dietary needs met because staff work well with parents to gain the relevant information that is recorded onto sheets. All staff including the cook sign to acknowledge they have been informed of the children's dietary needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel welcome in clean, organised, well-maintained premises which are suitable for purpose. The pre-school is noteworthy as space is organised effectively to enable children to benefit from a wide balanced range of experiences. It is stimulating and welcoming with displays reflecting children's recent experiences. However, insufficient emphasis is put upon providing the youngest children with scope for free movement and well spread out activities. There are limited opportunities for them to rest without disturbance. The premises are maintained at a comfortable temperature. There are suitable nappy changing and laundry facilities helping to underpin the care of the children. The furniture, toys and equipment are well maintained, safe and clean, helping to protect the children's well-being. If an item was thought to be hazardous it would be removed immediately. Generally the nursery is equipped to promote all areas of learning; however, the younger children have limited opportunities to explore a range of natural materials. Children confidently choose from a balanced range of activities helping to develop their confidence and decision making skills.

There are sensible procedures in place to keep the children safe. The premises are secure indoors and outdoors. Children, staff and visitors are recorded as they enter and leave the building. Parents give written permission for nominated people to pick their children up. Children learn to keep themselves safe, as they take part in fire drills and learn about road safety through road safety officers visiting. Comprehensive risk assessments including collecting children from school are carried out by staff to ensure the children's safety. Any issues are recorded and action taken.

Children are protected because staff understand their role in safeguarding children and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. The procedures for reporting concerns about children's welfare are in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Staff are reminded of their responsibilities during meetings and any new guidelines or legislation are cascaded down to them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff know the children well. They operate a key worker system that enables them to meet the individual needs of the children more effectively. There is a good induction procedure for settling children into the nursery that involves the parents. As a result children settle well and soon begin to take part in activities that help them to learn and acquire skills. Staff have a clear understanding of the developmental needs of the younger children and curriculum planning is based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They effectively use the children's 'Birth to three matters' assessment profiles to set individual learning outcomes for each child. In the main there is a reasonable range and balance of activities to promote their learning and children take part in both adult-led and child initiated activities. Throughout the day staff offer support and interact with the young children to help them progress. They enjoy painting, modelling with play dough, small world play and completing jigsaws. Babies follow their own routines until it is appropriate to move onto the nursery routine. They are developing strong relationships with their key workers that help them to feel safe and secure. The babies use appropriate equipment to develop their walking skills, such as push-along-toys and enjoy playing with musical toys.

The school children talk positively about their experiences in the out of school club. Children from different schools have positive relationships and mix well. They are able to choose from a wide range of resources and materials including computers. There are suitable facilities for them to complete their homework if appropriate. The children have good relationships with the staff and relate well to them helping the children to feel a sense of belonging.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pre-school children benefit from a provision that is extremely conducive to their learning and development. They are accommodated in a separate, purpose built structure with a stimulating environment. The large amount of space gives them scope for free movement and well spread out activities. The wall displays and ceiling hangings reflect the children's experiences and learning helping to consolidate their learning. Staff successfully promote the children's thinking by asking challenging open-ended questions. Their evaluations of completed activities clearly inform forthcoming weekly planning. The continuous provision plans and adult-led activities are being developed in line with the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework and learning outcomes in the six areas of learning are clearly identified. Assessments are used effectively to inform planning. Staff make relevant observation

on the children and these are transferred onto Foundation Stage transition sheets that include all stepping stones and early learning goals. This enables the staff to identify any gaps in the children's learning.

There are good relationships throughout the pre-school. As a result children settle well and quickly become engrossed in activities. Those new to the pre-school are shown where resources are kept and encouraged to access them. All resources are at child height and labelled with pictures and words to help them operate independently. As children prepare to play outside they are encouraged to dress themselves, however, the children have limited opportunities to promote their self help skills at meal and snacks times. The children's communication, language and literacy skills are developing well. They are exposed to an array of printed letters and words around the pre-school, learning that print carries meaning and to recognise their names and common words. Children are taught initial letter sounds and names. They begin to associate the chosen letter with objects that begin with the same letter. In the 'post office' role play area children write letters helping them to discover the different purposes for writing. They sign their letters as some are able to write their own names. Children confidently access books and are learning how to handle them appropriately, thereby developing the enjoyment of reading. High priority is put upon imaginative play including role play and small world play. A popular theme is 'Pirates' as the children dress up in costumes and become very convincing characters. Children have many opportunities for counting and recognising numbers in their learning environment. For example, they are encouraged to take down the counting cards hanging from the hooks to practise these skills. They join in with number rhymes such as 'Five Fat Sausages' encouraging them to count and calculate. Throughout the session children handle and explore shapes and in doing so become familiar with them. Children create collages with a wide variety of shapes and as they work are able to name the common shapes. In completing puzzles and building with a variety of construction kits, children learn how shapes fit together

Through themes children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. For example they begin to appreciate peoples' roles in the community through the topic, 'People who help us'. In the 'Hospital' theme children learn about the body. They work on simple computer programmes helping them learn through technological equipment. Children have good opportunities to develop their creative skills both in child initiated and adult-led activities. They enjoy painting, drawing and chalking. Examples of their works are displayed around the room signalling to children that their work is valued. They explore different textures as they mould with play dough and play in water and sand.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff demonstrate a sound awareness of equal opportunities, learning difficulties and disability issues. There are positive staff to child ratios enabling staff to meet children's needs more effectively. Children are warmly greeted by staff who are interested in what the children have to say. They are very well supported in their chosen activities, helping to extend their learning and acquisition of skills. Birthdays are celebrated helping children to feel a sense of belonging. Children over three years benefit from using resources and taking part in activities that reflect equal opportunities, however less emphasis is put upon the younger children having these experiences. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are welcomed into the setting, where they are well supported and appropriate guidance and support is given to the staff by other professionals.

Children are very well-behaved. Staff adopt consistent strategies to promote appropriate behaviour. They value and encourage the children who are mannerly and happily help to tidy up. This helps them to learn responsible behaviour and to care for their environment. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff create a welcoming atmosphere. They work with parents to meet individual children's needs and ensure they are fully included in the life of the setting. The effective key worker system ensures parents are kept informed of their children's progress. Parents receive daily feedback from the key workers. The babies' key workers meet formally with their parents every three months to discuss their individual plans, routines and ensure all relevant information is exchanged. Parents of the older children are offered regular meeting with staff when they can view their children's assessment folder and discuss their progress. The setting also holds 'Family Work Shops', to demonstrate the sort of activities that children experience and the benefits they gain from them. Parents speak highly of the provision; they have no concerns, find the staff very approachable and feel well informed. They believe their children are making good progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management are good. As a result staff are motivated, loyal and take immense pride in their work. They are good role models and set a very professional tone. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Staff are confident, secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have begun to plan in accordance with the new Early Years Foundation Stage and have a very positive attitude to the forthcoming changes. Senior staff work directly with the children and as part of the team and therefore are able to monitor the provision and activities on a daily basis. Room leaders ensure staff understand and are able to work with the planning and assessment documents. They have many positive strategies in place for continually raising standards. Staff in each room complete a self-evaluation form and carry out a 'peer on peer' assessment on a regular basis. Procedures are in place for staff to focus on an identified aspect of the provision to analyse in detail and where appropriate improve their practice. Staff meetings are held monthly and annual appraisals take place, from these the training needs of the staff are identified and opportunities provided to take up the training.

Organisation is good, resulting in positive outcomes for children. Staff have a good understanding of the conditions of their registration and how to meet the standards. They have a secure knowledge of how to vet staff to ensure that children are well protected. Positive adult to child ratios and staff deployment contribute to children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Records, policies and procedures work in practice to underpin the good care of the children. Children follow a sensible routine that includes a free-play session, outdoor play, snacks, meals adult-led activity, sleep and rest time. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection staff were required to improve documentation, safety and the provision of resources. All attendance records now include the times of children's arrival and departure. The first floor bathroom window has now been fitted with window locks to improve

the safety of the children. The toddlers now have a reasonable balance of toys and equipment, however some issues regarding resources have been raised in the main body of the report.

At the last nursery education inspection the staff were required to use assessments more effectively when planning and to promote the children's use of books. The assessment systems are clearly linked to planning to ensure they are used effectively to plan the next steps for the children in all areas of learning including mathematics. Children are able to easily access books and have a choice of comfortable areas in which to read and share books with each other and staff.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 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

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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 space is used effectively for children under three-years-old to include opportunities for them to rest safely without disturbance and scope for free movement and well spread out activities
- increase the younger children's opportunities to explore a range of natural materials and provide them with resources that promote positive images of diversity.

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):

- increase the children's opportunities to promote their self help skills at meal and snacks times.

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