

Leapfrog Day Nursery - Chelmsford

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	650090
Inspection date	17 April 2008
Inspector	Sandra Daniels
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Registered person	Leapfrog Day Nurseries (Trading) Ltd
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?

Leapfrog Day Nursery, Chelmsford is part of a national chain of settings under the ownership of Busy Bees. It opened in 2001 and operates from a purpose built single storey unit in Chelmsford, Essex. A maximum of 99 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.00 to 19.00 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 122 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, 39 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider community. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 21 staff. 15 of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and there are currently three members of staff working towards a qualification.

The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment that is very clean and bright. They begin to learn the importance of good hygiene through the daily routine and they learn about minimising the spread of germs through regular hand washing. Children know why and when they should wash their hands, for example, children say they need to 'get rid of germs' as they wash their hands after using the toilet. In addition, the use of liquid soap and paper towels contributes to minimising the risk of cross-infection. Children develop independence as they confidently take themselves to the toilet to attend to their personal needs. Bright visual prompts in the form of photographs of the children are displayed in the hand washing areas helps to remind children to wash and dry their hands thoroughly, to prevent germs from hurting their tummies.

Children learn about healthy eating because snack times and mealtimes are well organised and afford children good opportunities to enjoy a variety of healthy foods that are good for them. In addition, children are able to enjoy fresh milk or water with their snack, contributing to their good health. Staff ensure that snack foods cover the main food groups and are varied and interesting for children. Children are able to access fresh drinking water freely during the session, helping them to learn the importance of keeping their bodies hydrated. Menus are planned to ensure that children are well nourished. Older children are able to serve themselves and younger ones are well supported as they are given the time to experiment and discover how to feed themselves. In this way children are encouraged to become independent and begin to make choices about their food. Babies' emotional needs are very well met as practitioners always hold them whilst bottle feeding, talking quietly to them as they do so. Information relating to children's dietary requirements, preferences and allergies is collated. As a result, children's good health is safeguarded. A sick child policy, clear accident procedures and staff's up-to-date first aid training means that they can act in the best interests of children in the event of a medical emergency or an accident.

Children receive very good opportunities to participate in activities to promote their large muscle movements both inside and outdoors; this includes riding bikes, ball games, running freely, climbing apparatus and music and movement. As a result, children develop a healthy attitude to exercise and they are beginning to learn about changes that occur in their bodies as they embark on vigorous physical play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The nursery provides a very welcoming environment for children, parents and visitors. Clear information is placed on notice boards and children's creations are attractively displayed on the walls helping to give them a sense of belonging and achievement. Children and parents are greeted warmly by staff. Children freely access the wide range of attractive, well-maintained play equipment and resources. A range of child-height furniture enables children to extend their play and learning in safety and comfort. The good organisation of the play space along with thorough daily checks of all child-accessible areas ensures the environment remains safe for children. Toys and resources are regularly checked and cleaned so they remain in good condition for the children to use. The provision of child-accessible storage encourages children to extend their own play and learning. Staff support children very well, encouraging them to

tidy away when they have finished playing, thereby keeping the play space free from tripping hazards and helping children to learn about the importance of doing things for themselves.

There are very good systems in place for ensuring that children are safe on the premises, for example, a secure entry system, a visitor record and very good supervision of children at all times. Thorough risk assessments are in place and daily safety checks are carried out by competent staff. No safety issues were highlighted at the time of the inspection. All external entrances are kept locked, ensuring no unauthorised persons can gain access and pose a risk to children. There are highly effective procedures in place for the safe arrival and collection of children. Parents and carers bring children right into their base room and only persons authorised to do so may collect children from the nursery. Children have very good opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe. They participate in games and discussions about how to cross roads safely and practise this when they go out for walks. Children practise regular emergency evacuation procedures with staff so that they know what to do in the event of a fire.

Children are extremely well protected as staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. Appropriate support documents are in place to ensure that practitioners follow correct procedures in the event of any concerns. All staff have attended child protection training, procedures are up to date and information on this subject is actively made available to parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are extremely happy and settled. They have great fun, look forward to attending and their confidence grows as they become familiar with the routine. Children develop a positive attitude towards learning as they purposefully engage in a broad range of interesting and challenging activities throughout the day. Children play an active part in the setting. They are animated and enthusiastic as they make choices about their play and care. Practitioners are skilled and use their solid understanding of early years guidance, such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, to provide high quality care and education.

Children benefit from sensitive interactions from staff to promote their care and development. Very warm caring relationships enable children to feel safe and secure. Their care is enhanced by effective organisation. Knowledgeable staff successfully provide interesting experiences to ensure children enjoy what is on offer in the setting. They work very hard to ensure children reach their full potential through very enjoyable play opportunities. Space and resources are organised successfully and spontaneous and inspired activities provide young children with interesting and exciting experiences to broaden their overall development. Children are stimulated and play effectively both independently and with others. Younger children make excellent progress because staff recognise the uniqueness of each child. Communication skills are well supported through high quality adult-child interactions. Children begin to make sense of the world and express their ideas as they join in a range of exploratory and sensory experiences. For example, playing with ice and noticing that as it melts it turns to water and experiencing the difference between dry and wet cornflakes.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are eager to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They are inspired by the range of stimulating, relevant activities related to their interests and needs. They freely access a good range of well-chosen resources which support their learning across all areas of learning. Staff clearly

recognise important factors about how children learn and have a strong knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Practical, real-life experiences allow children to relate on a personal level to things and provide the best opportunities for them to learn. For example, during a theme about life cycles, children watch the process as caterpillars turn into butterflies.

The curriculum is very well planned to promote children's progress towards the early learning goals and to ensure the inclusion of all children. Plans clearly cover all six areas of learning and there is an effective system in place to ensure that each child covers each area equally or according to their needs. Activities have a clear purpose and plans show how children will be grouped, the resources needed, staff deployment and provision to extend or adapt activities and resources, as children learn at different rates. Children are encouraged to think and to demonstrate what they know and can do. They are consistently encouraged by practitioners who have high, but realistic, expectations of them. Practitioners use a very good variety of teaching methods which help children to learn effectively, taking account of their age, capability, additional needs, home language and other relevant factors.

Children are kind and courteous towards others and can often be heard volunteering to help the adults. Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and manage this very well. Children are able to share and take turns and participate in group activities. Ratios ensure that there is always sufficient staff to work and play directly with children, supporting, encouraging and challenging them. Children thoroughly enjoy stories and respond with relevant comments and questions. Three and four-year-olds are developing their early writing skills through a variety of opportunities. For example, children playing in the 'Leapfrog Veterinary Surgery' make appointments in a diary for the sick animals. However, these opportunities could be further developed by children being encouraged to write their name on paintings and drawings. Exploration with paint, dough, dry and damp sand and a wide range of natural materials helps children to represent their experiences, feelings and ideas in a multitude of ways. They explore and investigate, finding out about the world around them as they plant herbs in the garden. Children are able to link sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of familiar words, such as their name and the names of friends. There are some labels around the room, helping children to become familiar with print in various forms and to begin to recognise familiar words.

Children gain confidence in using numbers in their role play and respond enthusiastically to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and daily routines. Children make estimates of how many steps the bee will need to take to reach the mango; adding to and subtracting from their original guess until they reach the correct number. Physical skills develop and improve through a vast number of opportunities, including moving to music and using the outdoor climbing equipment. However, there are some areas of the garden which could be utilised further in order to maximise outcomes for children.

Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs and build on this information extremely effectively to help children achieve as much as they can. A flexible approach to planning and a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are perceptive to children's thinking and language skills. They use effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements and to plan experiences that help children take the next step in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children play in an inclusive environment where staff value individuality and acknowledge the contribution each child makes. Staff have very calm and gentle manners and treat children with good respect. They know the children very well and understand how to get the best from each child. A range of resources reflect all people in society. This encourages children to develop a positive attitude towards diversity. Children learn about the wider world as they celebrate religious and cultural festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. Children clearly feel a strong sense of belonging; both in their base group and in the nursery community. They go on local outings with staff, for example, along the river where they go bug hunting and learn about seasonal changes. Children also enjoy visits from people in the community, such as a dentist and health visitor.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive highly effective support from the group's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator who attends relevant training and receives support from the Area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, who visits regularly. Staff monitor children and meet with parents to discuss any concerns; they share observations made and urge them to seek further advice and guidance from health professionals such as their doctor or health visitor. Children receive good support to meet their individual needs, for example, staff are beginning to use sign language with children of all ages.

Children learn to understand responsible behaviour. They follow the very good examples set for them by staff and learn to share and take turns as they play together in harmony. Children respond very well to practitioners' calm and consistently positive approach. Rather than being told not to do something, children actually learn about responsible behaviour as staff suggest alternative methods of dealing with things. Older children are encouraged to negotiate and resolve their own conflicts and they are given time to do this by staff who know they do not always have to intervene too soon. Children are polite and develop an awareness of, and consideration for, the feelings of others. Children develop secure and trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. They make strong friendships which often extend outside the playgroup. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are very effective strategies in place for staff to build strong relationships with parents and carers which contributes significantly to children's well-being. Staff provide extensive information to parents both on entry and throughout their time at the setting through newsletters, a detailed notice board and a comprehensive range of policies and procedures relating to all aspects of the provision. All necessary records and parental consents are in place which means staff offer children appropriate care. Practitioners seek parents' views through questionnaires and special information displays. They use this information to respond effectively to improve the service on offer. Parents evenings are well attended and contribute significantly to the family ethos of this nursery.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that children are cared for consistently and in accordance with their parents' wishes. This is enhanced by daily verbal feedback to ensure that parents are informed about what their children have been doing whilst attending. Consistent verbal feedback and availability of written plans helps to ensure that parents of three and four-year-olds know about what their children have been doing whilst attending. In addition, they are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning through being informed of themed activities, helping out in the session and being kept fully informed about their child's achievements through regular meetings with key staff.

Parents evenings have proved to be very popular and the setting continues to develop ways of involving parents in their children's learning and enabling them to pass on what they know about their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall children's needs are met. Children's welfare and safety is effectively maintained because robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure they are cared for by suitable staff. A comprehensive induction ensures all staff clearly understand and can implement the nursery policies, procedures and high standards of care. Therefore children's well-being and care are enhanced. Children receive good care from qualified staff who are encouraged to undertake a range of training and are expected to complete the nursery's core training programme. This means they complete training in first aid, food hygiene, child protection and equal opportunities. Consequently, they continue their professional development which enhances the service provided. Ongoing effective appraisal systems are in place to highlight the staff's key strengths and training requirements. This time is also used to update information about the staff and to check their continued suitability to work with children.

The operational plan works very well in practice. Comprehensive policies and procedures are successfully implemented and staff are deployed effectively to ensure children receive consistent, high quality care and support in their learning and play. The environment is well organised to provide good play and learning opportunities. Therefore, children feel safe and secure and are happy to be there. The management team are proactive in ensuring the service provided meets the needs of the children and families. This is made possible through a highly effective self-evaluation system, the nursery sets clear action plans with timescales and how these will be achieved. This shows the management are committed to enhancing the outcomes for the children in their care.

Staff are effective in ensuring children have time and space to participate in well-planned activities and experiences and time to develop their independent play and explore the environment. For younger children staff plan and implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework very well. All staff work well as a team, are good role models for behaviour and are dedicated to enhancing children's care and development. Consequently, all children's developmental progress is good.

Leadership and management is good. The setting is clearly led and managed for the benefit of the children. Management has clear aims for improving the quality of care and education for children and action plans are in place to address any issues. Staff attend a range of training that is identified to further develop their knowledge and understanding and so increase the progress children are making towards the early learning goals. All children are supported well to achieve their potential by staff working with parents and carers to support this progress. Management provides an induction for students and new staff which covers necessary information, policies and procedures. The manager is proactive in her approach and encourages all staff to play a full role in the setting. They hold regular staff meetings and reflect on their practice so that they are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. They evaluate the activities provided for the children and keep evidence to show how children make progress in their learning. The manager is always open to suggestions to improve the provision; from children, staff and parents alike.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to review children's hand washing practice in the under three's rooms. The risk of cross-infection is minimised for children as they now use hand washing basins in all base rooms. Children are further protected as they use liquid soap and paper towels. The provider also agreed to improve the welcoming environment and to provide suitable activities and resources for younger children to explore their creativity. The environment is decorated attractively with children's own artwork. The premises is extremely welcoming and inviting to both children and adults and children feel proud to see their work on display.

With regard to the provision of nursery education the provider agreed to further develop staff's understanding of the Foundation Stage and to develop the curriculum planning. Staff have received ongoing support in this area and are confident in their ability to use both planned and spontaneous opportunities to promote children's learning more effectively. The curriculum is planned to provide a broad and rich learning experience to promote children's progress across all six areas of learning.

The provider also agreed to develop the range of resources which reflect diversity. Children's understanding of similarities and differences is well-promoted as they have access to many books, posters, dressing-up clothes, role-play resources and small world play characters which represent a good range of abilities, cultures and religions, giving children many opportunities to learn about the wider community.

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):

- give consideration to the further development of the outside play area in order to maximise outcomes for 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):

- further increase opportunities for children to write by encouraging them to mark their own work when painting etc.

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