

Homesteaders Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	650074
Inspection date	04 October 2007
Inspector	Lynn Clements
Setting Address	The Homestead, Sudbury Road, Gestingthorpe, Halstead, Essex, CO9 3BL
Telephone number	01787 460255
E-mail	
Registered person	Susan Aitken
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - special measures.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Homesteaders Nursery has been open for 15 years. It operates from an annexe of the house belonging to the registered provider. The nursery is situated in the rural area of Gestingthorpe. There is a large outdoor area. The nursery is registered to provide care for a maximum of 10 children at any one time.

There are currently 24 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 16 children in receipt of nursery funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions each week.

The nursery opens five days a week for 50 weeks of the year. Opening times are 08.00 until 18.00.

Three members of staff work with the children. All three staff hold relevant early years qualifications. The provision receives support from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and the Kid's Club Network.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Opportunities for children to talk about why they need to wash their hands after using the toilet or before eating are limited and, as a consequence, children do not develop a sound understanding about the importance of personal hygiene while they are attending the provision. Children enjoy playing outside. However, animal fouling in the play area, the storage of equipment outside and the lack of sufficient cleaning routines before children play with the equipment, pose a potential risk to their health from a variety of germs. Health-related documentation is in place. Staff follow sick child procedures in order to protect other children from the spread of infection. Members of staff have attended relevant first aid training, which enables them to provide appropriate care in an emergency. Parents are kept informed of any accidents or incidents.

Children do not have access to drinking water at all times to ensure they remain properly hydrated. There are some opportunities to learn about healthy eating, as they talk with staff about the lunches they have brought. Parents provide a range of healthy meals for children. Children are able to access the meals their parents have provided as and when they are hungry; this enables them to meet their own needs. During the morning staff provide a snack which consists of a biscuit and some squash, which does not meet healthy eating choices for children. There are limited opportunities for children to build on their independent skills during meal times, as the staff pour the drinks and prepare the food. Staff do try to engage children in discussion during meals, about foods which are good and those which are not so good. Staff have completed food hygiene training and ensure these procedures are implemented in the kitchen to prevent cross contamination.

Children move freely around the nursery. Staff do not plan for outside play, although they have a satisfactory understanding about the importance of fresh air and physical activity. Equipment is in place to provide activities both inside and outside which enable children to build on their existing physical skills. Children use a variety of wheeled toys, making up pretend games as they set off on their bikes and in their cars, stopping at imaginary traffic lights. Children climb and balance and join in team games which provide opportunities for them to take turns and negotiate their play. Children are able to rest as they need to.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

An annual risk assessment is conducted. However, regular risk assessments are not carried out and, as a consequence, hazards in the outside play area have not been identified to protect children from harm. The organisation of activities enables children to move around the nursery. However, toys and equipment are not checked to ensure they remain in suitable condition for the children to use. In addition to this, staff actively hand out broken equipment such as bats or prams for the children to play with. Sufficient child-height furniture is in place.

Children are reminded by staff to tidy away after playing, to prevent tripping hazards. There are procedures in place to ensure the safe arrival and collection of children. Fire evacuation drills are practised regularly which ensures that all children and members of staff know what to do in an emergency to keep themselves safe. However, whilst a fire blanket is situated in the kitchen area, no smoke alarms have been installed, fire exits are not clearly identifiable and

are obstructed with toys and resources. This poses a potential risk to the safety of children. Whilst taking walks and trips outside children begin to learn about road safety in group situations.

Staff have completed child protection training. A policy is in place and shared with parents. Staff know the procedures for reporting concerns to ensure children are safeguarded from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Children move freely around the setting. Toys and resources are stored mainly in cardboard boxes placed on the floor, little attention is given to providing exciting and attractive activities or displays to promote the children's interest or participation. Children are able to choose what they want to play with. However, staff are not vigilant in removing broken or damaged toys and during the inspection children played with old broken prams and discoloured broken bats. Simple planning is in place. However, this is not discussed or shared as a staff team and, as a consequence, learning opportunities are not always sufficiently matched to meet children's individual needs. For example, attention to developing learning opportunities for children under three years is limited and there are no systems in place to observe and record what children do or to plan their next steps for learning and development. Relationships with children are warm and caring and staff provide time for them to be active indoors and outside. Staff encourage children, for instance to play simple board games or jigsaws. Staff support children to develop social relationships with each other.

Children receive appropriate praise and encouragement which helps to promote positive attitudes. They demonstrate their natural curiosity as learners, offering their ideas during meal time discussions, as they talk about the rainbow they saw. Children enjoy singing spontaneously while playing outside in the rain. They construct from a variety of building blocks. However, opportunities for them to develop their imagination through planned and attractive role play scenarios or use of a wide variety of creative media is limited. Verbal feedback is shared with parents and carers at the beginning and end of each day.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. While children are confident and members of staff are supporting them, for instance, to ride two wheeled cycles at three years. There is no depth of knowledge about the six areas of learning and extremely limited knowledge about the stepping stones and how children make progress through these towards the early learning goals. Scrap books are kept of children's work while in the nursery. However, these are not monitored or used to ensure progress is made. There are no systems in place to record children's starting points; no formal records of assessment to support them and identify their next steps for learning. Assessment is inadequate. Planning systems are in place, however, these are limited and do not take account of what children know and can do in order for them to make sufficient progress in the Foundation Stage. There are no systems in place to share information with parents about children's attainment on entry. Parents do not have opportunities to share valuable information from home about what their child can do. The content, suitability and effectiveness of the provision is rarely monitored and evaluated and limited attention is given to improving the quality or focus of the nursery education.

Children are beginning to negotiate their ideas and take time to listen to each other. They have access to some mark-making materials. They use number language in their play, as they count how many aeroplanes have flown over the nursery. However, this is inappropriately supported by members of staff, who lack sufficient knowledge of different teaching methods to support and extend children's calculation skills. Children talk about different shapes, naming them and matching them to the correct symbols. They share their news from home, talking about foods they ate at a barbeque. Children are beginning to learn about the weather and different seasons of the year, through discussion and first hand experiences, as they play outside in the rain or talk about the giant rainbow they saw. Staff have introduced a weather book. However, while children share their ideas, all recording in their weather book is done by members of staff who miss opportunities to develop child participation to extend their existing skills.

Posters and pictures around the setting provide some positive images of diversity for children. Children are beginning to learn about other cultures, for example, as they talk about the different homes in which people live. They use information communication technology to build on their existing computer skills, showing increasing control as they use the mouse. Children build and construct using a variety of resources such as click together bricks and building blocks. They play outside in most weathers. Children feed the chickens and use the space to run, ride wheeled toys and use large apparatus with increasing control. However, staff lack knowledge and understanding about learning intentions and little focus is given while children play to extend what they are doing. Children demonstrate spatial awareness while playing close to others. Few messy play opportunities are made available, apart from a designated writing or drawing table. Children enjoy dressing up and developing their imaginary games as they drive their cars outside. They stop at imaginary traffic lights and talk through the colours as the lights change, on reaching green they zoom off. However, staff provide them with discoloured broken bats to represent the traffic lights while other children push prams around without any carrycot section or baby dolls to spark their imagination further. On the whole a significant number of children do not progress well enough because teaching is ineffective and there are no systems in place to observe or monitor children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Children begin to learn about other cultures during topics and creative activities. For instance, they make their own Chinese dragon and practise traditional dragon dancing; they also discuss and begin to explore the different types of houses people live in. Staff ensure there is no bias in their practice in relation to gender, race or disability.

There are currently no children attending with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the provider has completed relevant training and maintains a close working relationship with the local authority special educational needs coordinator.

Staff work as a team to provide consistent behaviour management support for children. A policy is in place and shared with parents. Children are beginning to develop their understanding about emotions, such as being kind or taking turns and sharing with others. There are some positive systems in place to support parents and children both inside the nursery and when they return home. For instance, parents telephoning staff in the evenings when they need support in organising bedtime.

Parents receive some verbal feedback which is given at the beginning and end of each day. Notice boards are used to provide general early years information. Parents and staff share

information prior to placement regarding children's individual care needs. This helps to promote continuity of care with regard to managing any medical or dietary needs.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is inadequate. Records of assessment are not in place and parents and carers are told when they place their children in the setting that if they want written records, they should choose another provision. No information about children's attainment is sought at the time of placement. Information provided for parents and carers on the Foundation Stage is limited and some of it is out of date. Parents and carers do not have any formal opportunities to share or contribute to their children's records of assessment; neither are they able to plot their child's progress through observational records. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Staff have a sound understanding about the importance of criminal record bureau checks. Systems are in place to ensure children are not left unsupervised with visitors. However, there is no key worker system in place to ensure particular members of staff are responsible for a child's well being on a daily basis and ensure that information about the child is exchanged with the parent or carer. Procedures for the employment of staff are adequate. The organisation of the play-space provides children with free flow access and enables them to make their own selections about their play and learning. Policies and procedures are in place. However, these have not been regularly updated and therefore do not reflect current requirements in legislation to ensure the safe and efficient running of the provision and to promote positive outcomes for children. Overall children's needs are not met.

Leadership and management of early education is inadequate. The effectiveness of the nursery is not formally monitored or evaluated and limited attention is given to the Foundation Stage. Staff lack sufficient understanding about plotting children's progress and identifying learning intentions to help them make effective progress towards the early learning goals. The provider does not seek support or guidance from the local authority with regards to developing staff teaching methods to support children during their formative years.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the provider has improved outcomes for children. The perimeter gate has been made safe to prevent children leaving unescorted. The provider has developed documentation to promote the smooth running of the setting. However, policies and procedures have not been regularly updated to reflect changes in legislation and this has been taken forward at this inspection.

Since the last nursery education inspection the provider has not met all of the key issues identified. Whilst curriculum plans have been introduced, they are limited and do not reflect the foundation stage stepping stones or identify clear learning intentions for children. This has been taken forward at this inspection. The provider has not developed systems for assessing the progress of children in her care and no formal observations are made of the children to inform planning and ensure they are challenged appropriately. This has been taken forward at this inspection. Training to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been accessed and staff are developing a close working relationship with the local authority special needs coordinator to provide advice and support.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - special measures.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities by using an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- ensure that furniture, equipment and toys provided are suitable in design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards
- ensure that: hazards to children on the premises are minimised; the premises comply with health and safety regulations; staff are trained to have an understanding of health and safety requirements; a risk assessment is carried out of the outside play-space; smoke detectors which conform to BS EN safety standards are provided and appropriate fire precautions are taken
- promote the good health of children and take positive steps to prevent the spread of infection: this refers to keeping areas used by children free from animal fouling; complying with health and safety requirements and ensuring that premises and equipment are clean and meet environmental health requirements
- provide children with regular drinks in adequate quantities for their needs and ensure that snacks are properly prepared, nutritious and comply with their dietary needs

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

The setting requires special measures to improve the provision for nursery education. The following urgent action is required:

- develop records of assessment to show how children are making progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, based on clear observations of what they know and can do; ensure their next steps are clearly identified in all six areas of learning (this also applies to care)

- increase staff knowledge and understanding about how children learn through play; develop the current planning systems to include clear learning intentions, based on the Foundation Stage and ensure that adaptation in planning is applied consistently in all six areas of learning to support and challenge all children effectively
- increase opportunities for children to engage in creative activities, for example, making three dimensional models, using malleable materials and developing their imagination to paint and create using a wider variety of creative media (this also applies to care)
- provide opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's records of assessment and ensure they are kept fully informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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