

St Nicholas Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	129392
Inspection date	04 July 2007
Inspector	Sheila Harrison
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Registered person	St Nicholas Nursery 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Nicholas Nursery registered in 1995. It is one of eight provisions operated by Sunhill Daycare (Europe) Ltd. Nursery provision has been offered from these premises for over fifty years. The nursery mainly serves families in the urban area of Hemel Hempstead. The setting opens 51 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday, between 07.30-18.30, and is registered for 66 places. There are currently 80 children from three months to five years on roll. This includes 40 funded three and four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

The nursery is housed in an old listed farmhouse with a secure garden. The premises consists of a baby unit on the first floor. On the ground floor children are grouped generally by their age with three rooms for children aged under three years and two pre-school rooms for children aged three and four years. Seventeen full and part-time staff work with the children. Over half the staff have an appropriate early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well nourished. They enjoy a varied and healthy menu with freshly prepared ingredients including sufficient fruit and vegetables. Their dietary needs are well protected as the nursery cook checks the children's special requirements daily, the older children use their own table mats that note any allergies clearly. Children learn about healthy eating with activities on food tasting. Posters are displayed on the positive effects of a healthy diet on their bodies. Mealtimes are organised into groups of older and younger children and are generally social occasions. Children have access to drinking water as there are suitable jugs and cups in each room.

Children are learning simple hygiene routines as they are encouraged to wash their hands before meals and after the toilet. Tissues and hand cleaning gel is freely available to minimise the spread of infection. Children are well protected in an emergency as staff have first aid training and suitable first aid equipment is available in the setting. Parents are suitably informed of all accidents. Staff ensure babies are changed in a caring and sympathetic manner and young children are beginning to succeed at toilet training. Access to the toilet is limited for some children due to the listed building status of the premises. The way that staff are deployed means that occasionally older and more able children cannot always visit the toilet when they have asked. This does not fully meet their physical needs.

Children generally enjoy sufficient chances to exercise. Most days in better weather children can use the large well equipped garden. Older children climb on the challenging play equipment. They practise their exercises and play with the parachute. Staff organise an obstacle course indoors for the younger children to begin to develop control over their bodies. Children can rest and sleep in peaceful surroundings according to their individual needs and circumstances. Staff snuggle children close to them to ensure they are comfortable and relaxed for a quick nap.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a comfortable and welcoming environment. Staff check the premises daily and there is an efficient procedure for dealing with any maintenance problems or regular caretaking. Children are developing a sense of belonging as posters and pictures are suitably displayed. There are valuable opportunities within the environment for children to see labels and recognise their own names. Children use a broad range of equipment that is purposeful and safe. Outside the climbing equipment has a safety surface. There is a large range of toys that are arranged invitingly to encourage children to be occupied and make their own choices in the pre-school rooms. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as they are reminded to use the new challenging climbing frame safely. They play with a useful range of road safety equipment in the garden. They are familiar with the regular fire evacuation procedures. Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are aware of the child protection policy and know who to contact if there are any concerns. Most staff have completed some child protection training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled. Those who are new to the nursery are helped to leave their main carers by staff who are sensitive to their needs. Close and caring relationships increase the children's sense of trust with their early communication skills being well supported. Young children's development is well promoted as staff confidently use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to observe and plan activities to meet the individual needs of the children. Babies are encouraged to learn through their senses as they explore the tactile properties of custard. Young children become competent learners as they play imaginatively with the dressing up clothes and play food. They copy the actions of the staff at lunch time by waving plates over the food to cool it.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are happy and are making suitable progress towards the early learning goals. Plans include all the areas of learning and many of the stepping stones to provide a broad and purposeful curriculum. The assessment system shows the child's progress towards the early learning goals and identifies the next steps in their learning although it does not fully inform the planning system or identify the child's approach to learning. Children are secure in the routine and willing to participate in self-chosen activities and games organised by the adults. They are beginning to concentrate as they enjoy a memory game and some children can record their achievements in words and pictures. Staff identify some learning objectives through routine activities as children count the numbers of boys and girls at registration and staff encourage mathematical language by asking suitable questions. Children do simple calculation as they add the number of objects and use their fingers to count. They are keen to offer their own ideas. They comment that they have heard the tidy up time music several times and it is time for a change. Older children help the younger ones as they remind them to wear an apron whilst at the water tray.

Most staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. However, some staff are less confident in implementing the learning outcomes for children. Staff use different methods to ensure the level of challenge is sufficient to interest most children. However, some formal activities are not linked to the child's interests or stage of development and are too difficult; this hinders some children's disposition to learn. Staff are generally well deployed within the setting to support children's care and learning as they spend time with the children. However, at times children spend too long sitting as they move from story time to sitting doing their work books. They occasionally have another story time if the weather is inclement and as a result, children are distracted and start to fidget, limiting opportunities for children to manage their own behaviour.

Children handle books correctly, they have a wide range of interesting fiction and non fiction books. They link sounds and letters but some letter recognition exercises are not helpful. They have useful chances to see their names. However there are few occasions for meaningful writing in role-play situations. Children have the chances to learn on a more active scale in the summer months when some of the resources are moved outside. However, at other times of the year children go outside for physical play and opportunities are missed for children to develop their learning in other areas of the curriculum. Children have a range of equipment to encourage their physical skills. They make small models with modelling materials, pour sand competently and pour the water into small containers. Children have some access to the computers. They build with construction blocks and make pathways with a train track. Children play creatively

in the role play area, they use the papier-mâché fruits they made themselves to have a picnic. Staff create a tent out of the parachute and supply torches to allow the children to explore their current interest in camping.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to understand their own needs and to respect the needs of others as emotions are discussed. They have many chances to discuss their life at home including their holidays and extended family. They have the opportunity to play alone or in small groups and are beginning to form friendships. Children generally behave well as staff praise and encourage the children frequently. However, when staff are busy or when children are standing in a queue they find it difficult to manage the children's behaviour. Children are beginning to take responsibility as they independently sweep up the sand at 'tidy up time'. They say a 'thank you' prayer before lunch. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. There is a satisfactory system to identify children's needs and to ensure they receive appropriate support strategies.

Children learn about the wider world as they raise money for national charities and they sponsor a child from a developing country. Examples of art work from the sponsored child with photographs of the village are displayed. They enjoy celebrating traditional festivals and they acknowledge festivals in other religions. Photographs show children entranced by the visits from the local insect zoo. Children often visit the nursery pets.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive newsletters with details on the current themes and events involving the parents. They are adequately informed on their child's achievements through regular verbal feedback and parents evenings. Parents find the daily record sheets for the babies helpful and describe the staff as approachable and flexible. The plans, including the learning intention for the daily activities, are displayed on a notice board. Details of the policies and procedures and the last inspection report are available for parents to read. There is also information on the company's website which makes a valuable contribution to the continuity of care for the children.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a generally effective organisation. A suitable use of documentation supports the care of the children. Registers record the times children and staff attend and they generally record the times when children move between rooms. The regulations relating to complaints log have been considered with a suitable complaints log in place. Children are cared for by staff that have a sound understanding of childcare. The setting undertakes recruitment procedures. However, until the improvements recently implemented are fully operational, recruitment systems are not robust enough, for example, there are no completed checks on health and disqualification status. Children generally have enough support due to sufficient staff working with the children for most of the day. However, the organisation of staff breaks potentially limits the safe management of the children.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The setting has suitable procedures to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The company quality assurance manager visits the provision regularly and the managers do unannounced spot checks during the session to ensure children are safe and well occupied. Staff success is celebrated through an 'employee of the

month scheme'. Information from the evaluation of some activities, staff meetings and regular one to one discussions are used to monitor and improve the quality of care and education. The setting is committed to the improvement of care and education of the children. They have recently invested in a large challenging climbing frame for the older children to develop their awareness of height and develop their physical skills. The setting receives support from the local authority. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure regular risk assessments are carried out and to ensure potential hazards are minimised. They consented to improve the staff's knowledge of child protection procedures.

Children's welfare is generally safeguarded as the senior staff have completed on-line child protection training and other staff have a satisfactory understanding of the procedures as they have discussed the company's policies and procedures at staff meetings. Children's safety is protected as the setting has an efficient system of risk assessments undertaken by the nursery senior management team. They informally use the information from the accident records to update these assessments. The nursery staff have responsibility to check their own rooms to ensure the premises are safe.

At the last education inspection the setting agreed to ensure they receive appropriate training for the Foundation Stage; to develop the planning system to relate assessments to the stepping stones, to identify the next steps of the children's individual educational programme and to review the provision of activities and experiences that challenge the older and more able children within the programme for mathematical development.

Some staff are developing a sound knowledge of the Foundation stage by working with the areas of learning and the stepping stones. However, staff do not fully use the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage' this leads to limitation of teaching methods. Some of the children's learning styles are not fully acknowledged and taken into account. Staff have developed a helpful range of planning and assessment systems. Each child has an individual learning plan linked to a stepping stone.

Children have a wide range of mathematic activities to challenge the older or more able children. They compare the weights of different fruits during a food tasting session. Posters with numerals and graphs children have made are well displayed and help children progress in their learning.

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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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):

- review the recruitment and vetting procedure to ensure staff caring for the children are suitable to do so
- organise the deployment of staff within the provision to ensure the safety, welfare and development of the children. (also applies to nursery education)

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 all staff are secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage
- plan a range of play activities that provide suitable challenge for children in line with their stage of development

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