

# Sunbeams St. Nicks

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY243400
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan Ennis
<b>Setting Address</b>	59 Canterbury Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 4LJ
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<b>Registered person</b>	Katherine Taylor
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

Sunbeams St. Nicks opened in 2002 and operates from one large hall within St. Nicholas Community Centre, Stevenage, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 to 15.15 term-time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 60 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for early education. Children come from within the St. Nicholas catchment area and the other surrounding areas. The pre-school supports children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 10 staff. Of these, five including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a qualification.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment. There are sound daily hygiene practices which minimise the spread of infection and promote children's health. For example, children wash their hands before snack and after creative activities. However, their understanding of the relevance of hygiene and healthy eating practices is not fully promoted because staff do not always discuss these issues with them to reinforce their learning. Children are sufficiently nourished and are offered healthy snacks and drinks, promoting their growth and development. These include fresh drinking water or milk and a variety of fresh fruits and biscuits. Their special requirements with regard to health and diet are well documented and parents' wishes are respected. Secure procedures regarding medication and accidents ensure that children's immediate welfare is protected.

Children enjoy a range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. They develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and coordination. They participate in activities such as action rhymes whilst also learning the names of body parts by singing for example, 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes.' They enjoy regular access to the outdoor area where they, for example, peddle on the bikes, jump on the trampoline and roll hoops down the hill. Their fine motor skills are developing as they use rolling pins to flatten their play dough and spatulas to pick up their 'cakes'.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe and welcoming environment. Good levels of security mean that the access to the premises is effectively monitored and so keeps children and staff safe. Children's safety is supported by staff that complete daily safety checks of both the inside and outside of the setting signing a sheet confirming that the check is complete. The emergency escape plan is regularly practised ensuring that staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow therefore protecting the children further. Children's knowledge of keeping themselves and others safe develops as staff give clear explanations of safe practices within the setting, such as, why they should only come down the slide rather than trying to climb up it.

Children use a range of safe, developmentally appropriate resources. Low tables, chairs and storage units ensure that children can eat, sit and play safely. They are offered a range of toys and resources that staff regularly check ensuring that they are clean and safe for use. Broken toys are immediately removed from play either to be fixed or disposed of. Children are adequately protected because some staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and are able to identify report and follow up any concerns. However, children's welfare is not fully promoted as procedures do not have regard to the local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled, enjoying their time at the setting. They are keen to participate in the activities and play opportunities provided and are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff, happily seeking staff for support and reassurance throughout the session. For example, when needing help to put on a dressing-up outfit children confidently

approach staff and indicate what they need. They are secure within the setting, helping them to feel confident to play and learn. For example, they are aware of all routines such as tidying up when the music starts. Children's sense of security is further promoted because staff gather information from parents about each child, helping them to be aware of any issues.

Children are able to choose resources from those set out by staff and move freely between the activities on offer. Their learning is promoted because staff make suitable use of open-ended questions extending children's thinking and further developing their play. During snack staff ask 'Who can tell me what this shape is?' When the children reply 'Circle' the staff member reaffirms their understanding by saying 'Like our biscuits. What shape are they?' Whilst in the role play area staff encourage children's confidence as well as their further thinking. Children are asked to show the staff member how the key board works making them feel helpful and consolidating their own knowledge.

Children's development is generally promoted in most areas as some staff are trained in the 'Birth to three matters' framework and loosely plan a range of activities including it. However, the practical implementation of this is not always evident limiting children's developmental progress. Daily routines are soundly planned to meet the individual needs of the children attending. They have a balanced range of activities that stimulate and help all participate. For example, with a number of new and young children at the pre-school an action rhyme session is adapted catering for their lack of knowledge of the songs. Staff encourage all by saying 'Let's do it slowly so we all learn it' whilst exaggerating the movements to their eyes, ears and nose enabling the children to follow and learn the words. Older children are then encouraged to be 'teacher' showing the others what to do whilst building their own confidence and self-esteem.

#### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making sufficient progress and their overall development is generally promoted because staff working in this area have a sound knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. However, further support in this area would further enhance children's progress. The planning methods do not always relate activities to the stepping stones and Early Learning Goals, meaning that some areas of learning are not consistently promoted. Staff observe children but there is minimal assessment of children's starting points and the assessment procedure does not always give a clear indication of children's progress, which could result in a delay in highlighting potential concerns and in planning activities which offer appropriate and further challenge.

Children participate in a range of activities which foster their development and help them acquire new skills and knowledge. These include regular opportunities to participate in role play, crafts, construction and physical play. They also participate in themed work, providing them with opportunities to look at a range of topics such as where people work, mini beasts and transport.

Children are secure and demonstrate a sense of trust, for example, entering the pre-school confidently and mostly leaving their carers with ease. Their confidence and independence is further developed as they clear away their own plates and cups after snack and independently use the toilet. Children concentrate and listen to books and are developing a sound appreciation of this area, enjoying both group and individual stories relating some to past experiences such as their teddy bears picnic held earlier in the year. They are also starting to link sounds to letters such as the weeks letter M to mouse and mirror.

Children are beginning to recognise that numbers carry meaning, correctly counting in everyday situations, for example, the number of children sitting at the table for snack and counting out three loaves of bread in the role play 'bread shop.' Their understanding of mathematical concepts is promoted through simple activities such as shape recognition, sorting items according to colour and playing games including Dominoes. Children are developing an understanding of the uses of information and communication technology, for example, through using key boards and type writers. They are encouraged to use all senses when exploring and describing objects, for example, through the use of shaving foam when they are asked to think about how it feels and whether it is soft or not. They are gaining a sense of time through practical procedures and a consistent daily routine.

Children are developing an awareness of different forms of physical movement through, for example, climbing up the climbing frame and down the slide and jumping on the trampoline. They confidently use paint brushes, pencils and scissors developing their fine motor skills and are becoming more aware of their own bodily needs. Before going outside they discuss whether it is too hot for a jacket or not. Children are able to identify colours and enjoy a range of opportunities to explore colour, texture and shape, for example, through painting, sand play and sensory experiences including feeling for items in a bath of colourful feathers.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals. All children's individual needs are met as staff work together with parents from their initial visit to the group to the time when the child moves onto nursery. A 'Warm welcome' sheet enables parents to share information about their child making the transition from home to pre-school a smooth one. The use of a key worker system helps the staff get to know their particular group of children well. Activities and resources, such as the celebration of festivals, books, puzzles and role play equipment, promote children's positive view of the wider world and their understanding of other cultures. Their knowledge of their community is promoted through visits from people within the local area, such as someone visiting during Diwali wearing a sari to show the children. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified and met as there is a practical policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is implemented daily, working sensitively with individual children to ensure that all are included in the activities and routines. Children for whom English is an additional language are supported as they become more familiar with their surroundings being given time to settle before starting to learn which for many is a new language. Staff have attended additional training in this area, enabling them to provide appropriate support to all children.

Children play harmoniously with each other and are kind and caring to others. For example, seeing that a child's nose needs blowing another alerts staff and fetches them a tissue. Children take turns and share mostly without adult intervention. When they do momentarily forget staff get down to their level and reaffirm that it is not kind to take things of others and encourages an apology which the child gives. Praise is given freely, ensuring that children develop confidence and self-esteem and understand what they have done well. For example, when children who are potty training use the toilet for the first time they are given a sticker and told how clever they are. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered through the range of daily activities on offer and the positive and caring role models portrayed by members of staff.

Children's needs are well documented and met because of the staff's good relationship with parents. They are given clear written and verbal information about the setting when their child starts, ensuring they are aware of all policies and procedures and can help their child to settle. They are kept well informed of their children's daily activities through regular talks with staff and newsletters. This positive attitude helps ensure that parents' views are valued and appropriate care can be provided for each child. When questioned parent feedback reflected their positive thoughts about the pre-school with some saying that they are 'Very happy', that their child 'had come on so much' and the 'staff are lovely.'

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education is satisfactory. Parents are fully informed regarding the setting as a whole and receive newsletters about forthcoming events and theme topics. However, they are not suitably informed regarding the Foundation Stage and areas of learning therefore limiting their involvement in their child's learning. They receive written evidence of their child's development when the child leaves the setting and have access to the child's records throughout their time at the pre-school enabling them to monitor their child's progression and development.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Overall the children's needs are met. The registered person uses stable recruitment and vetting procedures and the ratio of qualified staff meets requirements. Some staff demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage enabling them to develop children's progress and understanding. Written plans are basically sound but assessments and observations are not always fully utilised to monitor and stretch children's achievements.

Sessions are suitably planned, with a balanced range of activities. Children are given sufficient time and resources to enable them to complete their activities and tasks. Children benefit from well deployed staff, who interact with them and give them sound support and encouragement. This helps children feel secure and confident. However, offering a flexible collection time throughout the last part of both sessions leads to disruption of the routine and has an unsettling affect on some of the children.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager acts as a good role model and staff are generally motivated showing commitment to ongoing improvements. The manager has developed sound aims and values for the provision and for the continuing improvements in children's care and education. The manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses for the children's education and what is required for improvement. Staff do not effectively monitor and evaluate children's learning, however, this is currently being developed. Children's welfare, care and safety are promoted because staff have a practical knowledge of the group's policies and procedures and have ensured that most documentation and records are in place. However, some policies and procedures are not up-to-date and there is therefore potential for delay in an emergency situation. The established staff team work well together and are good role models for children.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the registered person was asked to organise documentation and the staff to meet the needs of the children. Staff are deployed to meet the needs of all the children and move to where they can support them the most.

With regard to early education the registered person was asked to improve opportunities for children to explore mathematical concepts, to increase their awareness of letters, sounds and mark making and to give the children opportunities to learn how things work, information technology and experiences about the past and present. They were also asked to develop the curriculum planning and key worker system to promote all aspects of children's learning. Some opportunities are now available for children to explore these experiences but a further recommendation has been imposed with regard to further improvements required in the planning to ensure that all areas of learning are consistently promoted.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National standards. Ofsted received concerns regarding an accident and the standard of care being received. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit on 31 January 2006 to investigate these concerns under the following National Standards; 2 (organisation), 3 (care, learning and play), 6 (safety), 12 (working in partnership with parents and carers) and 14 (documentation).

Three actions were imposed following the visit: National Standard 7- ensure that accurate records are kept of all accidents, National Standard 2 - ensure that there is a system in place for registering staff attendance on a daily basis, showing hours of attendance, National Standard 12 - update the complaints procedure and policy to ensure that they meet current regulations issued in October 2005. Ofsted received a satisfactory response to the actions set on the 3 March 2006 and the provider remains qualified for registration.

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 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 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):

- further develop children's understanding of good personal hygiene
- ensure that the child protection procedure complies with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and that staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow
- improve outcomes for children from birth to three by using an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework and ensure that this information is made readily available to parents

- ensure that pre-school policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated
- improve the use of flexible departure times ensuring that all children's individual needs are met.

### **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):

- continue to develop the assessment and observation process to include an initial assessment to enable children's progress to be tracked from an early stage and to plan for their further development
- improve the system of planning to ensure that all areas of learning are sufficiently covered and that staff are supported in their use of it
- develop methods of sharing information with parents about the Foundation Stage and provide opportunities for them to contribute to their children's learning.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)