

The West Somerset Nursery Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	142817
Inspection date	09 November 2007
Inspector	Julie Neal
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Registered person	The West Somerset Nursery Group
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 outstanding. 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?

West Somerset Nursery is situated in Minehead. It is run by a voluntary committee and opened in 1998. It is registered to provide care for a maximum of 39 children under five years of age, and to provide out of school care for a maximum of eight children aged between five and eight years of age. Overnight care is not provided. There are currently 77 children on roll, including 21 children in receipt of funded nursery education. The nursery is open from 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday all year round. There are 13 members of staff working with children, 12 of whom have level 3 early years qualifications, and one of whom is working towards a level 3 qualification. They are supported by an administrator. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent daily routines and consistent good practice within the setting ensure that children are very well protected against the risk of illness and cross infection. Staff carry out rigorous daily checks to ensure that all areas are clean and hygienic, and remain so throughout the day. For example, changing areas are cleaned after every use, toilets and washbasins are cleaned routinely at different times throughout the day and are frequently checked, and kitchen hygiene routines are extremely thorough. Staff encourage children to manage their own personal hygiene needs extremely well, for instance carefully showing children how to wash and rinse their hands properly and ensuring they understand why this is important. Simple and effective strategies encourage children's independence in this area very well, for instance ensuring that there is a plentiful supply of soap and paper towels in all areas used by children means they can quickly attend to their own needs, such as washing their hands during play when they become sticky. Documents supporting children's health and wellbeing are clear and well maintained, for example records of any accidents in the setting, and of any medications given, and these are shared with parents. All staff have current first aid qualifications, ensuring that prompt attention is available to children in the event of an accident.

Children's individual dietary requirements are met extremely well. Babies and very young children have their bottles and meals according to their own personal routines, and as discussed with parents. Staff in the baby room promote a wonderfully relaxed and leisurely mealtime routine, allowing children to take their time and develop confidence as they explore new tastes and textures, and gradually develop independence in feeding themselves. Snacks provided by the nursery are robust and nutritious, with a very good variety of fresh fruit available. These include unusual fruits, such as physalis, which children eagerly investigate. Filling items, such as toast are included at snack times, in recognition of the fact that many children attend for a full day and so are hungry by mid morning. Children bring packed lunches, some parents choosing to provide cooked food to be reheated. Extremely clear procedures are in place to ensure that food is stored and reheated appropriately, which staff know and implement well. Presentation of meals and snacks is excellent. Staff take great care to ensure that food is attractively laid out on plates, and mealtimes are used extremely well to encourage children's independence and social interactions. For example, children as young as two years of age enthusiastically spread their own butter on toast; lunchtime is extremely sociable with older and younger children gathering together and more able children assist those who need help, such as with pouring drinks. Access to drinks is very good for all children throughout the nursery, ensuring they are not at risk of dehydration. Older children freely help themselves to water, and babies and very young children are frequently offered their bottles and cups.

Children have excellent opportunities to experience the health benefits of fresh air and physical exercise. All ages play outdoors frequently during the course of each day, with babies benefiting from their own enclosed space adjoining their base room where they can explore and stretch their muscles. This enables them to develop confidence in the use of equipment, such as ride-on cars, push-along walkers and small climbing frames, without risk from the more energetic play of older children. Staff organise outdoor activities extremely well, providing an excellent balance of free play and activities with specific learning objectives. For example, children enthusiastically join in a lively game of 'Simon Says', showing very good bodily awareness as they follow instructions and listen carefully; they are extremely confident as they use balance beams and climbing equipment, showing high levels of co-ordination and control.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The physical environment is extremely well organised, inside and outdoors, to meet the care, learning and developmental needs of children. The premises are bright, welcoming, and very child friendly. For example, the area where babies and very young children are based has low level windows so they can see outside, and the imaginative use of mobiles and sensory equipment in the nappy changing area provides interest for children.

Excellent organisation of the extensive range of resources throughout the nursery means that all children have extremely good access to a very wide variety of toys and equipment, appropriate to their age and stage of development. This encourages children to make choices in their play and promotes their confidence and self esteem very well. Resources are used extremely effectively to provide a very good variety of interesting play environments which children explore enthusiastically. For example, children of all ages make very good use of the messy room, relishing the opportunity to freely access an excellent variety of media and materials in creative play.

Children are safe within the setting and on outings because the staff team have an excellent understanding of health and safety issues and implement the setting's procedures extremely well. Excellent written risk assessments are made of all areas and rigorous daily checks of the premises and equipment ensure children's safety. The premises are extremely secure with access limited by coded key pad. This ensures no-one can enter the nursery without a member of staff and so supports children's safety. Routines for outings and excursions are excellent. Staff and children wear high visibility tabards so are easily identified when in public, and staff make extremely effective use of opportunities to teach children safe practise when crossing roads, resulting in children who have a very good understanding of road safety. Children learn very well about the safe use of equipment, for example older children help to make toast and talk knowledgeably about which parts of the toaster become hot and so must not be touched.

The staff team's excellent understanding of child protection issues further supports children's safety and wellbeing. They have a very good awareness of their responsibility to act where they have concerns regarding the abuse or neglect of children, and the comprehensive, well written procedures relating to child protection support staff well. Most staff have undertaken external child protection training and they use their knowledge extremely well in reviewing daily routines to ensure these are consistent in safeguarding children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children immensely enjoy the excellent variety of stimulating activities that encourage progress and development for all ages. They are extremely confident as they move freely between activities, all ages benefiting from an excellent choice of resources to use in their play. Children are very eager participants and extremely keen to try new things. For example, younger children enthusiastically collect a variety of autumn leaves and use these to make rubbings and pictures. They become engrossed using media, such as chalks and crayons to gain different effects and comparing these. Staff make excellent use of informal opportunities to develop children's skills in play. For example, when children are curious about how a sticky-tape dispenser works a member of staff shows them how to use it; when children collecting leaves outside spontaneously begin to throw them in the air staff encourage them to move their bodies and twirl and spin like leaves.

Staff have an excellent understanding of how children learn and develop through play. They use the 'Birth to three matters' framework extremely well to monitor individual children's stage of development. Activities for all ages are very well planned and staff use their excellent knowledge of individual children most effectively to ensure that all are challenged and stimulated. Babies and very young children explore avidly and their curiosity is encouraged, for instance as they experience their environment through a variety of sensory materials, such as mirrors and objects that catch and reflect light, and textures, such as leaves and bark from the natural world. Children interact extremely confidently with staff, they are encouraged to ask questions and staff listen and respond very well. Staff are extremely positive and promote a lively and cheerful environment where children have high levels of self esteem, and are encouraged to contribute actively in organising their play.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning.

Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They plan well to ensure children experience a very good variety of learning experiences that ensure progress in all areas. Staff make very good observations of what children do and share these effectively, using their excellent knowledge of individual children well to inform planning in order that all children are challenged well. Written plans are clear and effective, highlighting key learning objectives and identifying where activities can be extended to provide more challenge, and where individual children may require additional support. Processes for monitoring children's learning are in place and overall these are effective. However, inconsistent maintenance of some children's assessment records mean that these do not accurately reflect the very good progress children are making in all areas.

Children are happy and confident in the setting. They are encouraged to be independent and to make choices about the activities they engage in and the resources they use, and they quickly become absorbed in their play. They are very confident communicators who are keen to share their thoughts and ideas with each other and with adults. For example, they thoroughly enjoy the opportunity at circle time to tell their news from home and they listen very well to each other as they await their turn. Children enjoy using books and freely select from the variety that are attractively presented, looking at these independently and with friends, and selecting favourites to be read at story time. Children's phonic knowledge is very good and they link sounds and letters confidently, quickly identifying names that have the same initial letters, and enjoying games that encourage them to use rhyming sounds.

Children count well and are confident in simple problem solving. For example, they calculate the number of slices of fruit they need to cut at snack time in order that everyone has some. Children confidently identify the shapes of everyday objects, and use their ability to pour and measure in activities such as cookery. Their recognition of numerals is very good and children demonstrate this in the confident way they identify the correct numbers for the date, month, and year, whilst updating the calendar. Children explore and investigate the natural world, relishing the opportunities to roll and jump through fallen leaves and talking about the smell of autumn. Children learn about the care of animals, for instance they have giant snails in a tank and they know what these eat, preparing appropriate food for them, carefully cutting up pieces of fruit. Children's use of tools and equipment is very good. They learn to use tools appropriate to the task, for instance using sharp knives to peel and chop fruit, and blunt knives to spread toast. They use scissors and cutters safely, and use everyday household technology,

such as toasters, with a very good awareness of personal safety. Children are actively encouraged to be spontaneous and creative. They make extremely good use of paints, crayons, recycled and natural materials as they freely make their own pictures and representations. They enjoy excellent musical activities, using a variety of musical instruments and learning very well how to create rhythms, loud and soft sounds, and to follow the patterns in music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children of all ages are extremely happy and content. Excellent attention is given to the individual care and developmental needs of children, which are met extremely well. For example, babies are cared for by a small, consistent, team of staff who quickly get to know them and are familiar with their individual routines and their special requirements. Children's high levels of confidence and self esteem are promoted extremely well by staff who are warm, affectionate and responsive to children's needs. Babies and very young children receive plenty of cuddles, and staff make sure that children's special comforters are easily accessible to them, ensuring they feel secure and content. Children throughout the nursery are very well behaved. They show extremely high levels of care and concern for each other, for example older children are aware of the presence of younger children when playing outside and ensure their energetic game does not hinder the play of the younger ones. Staff make very clear explanations to children about daily routines and activities, giving them the opportunity to ask questions and taking time to ensure all children understand what is expected of them, so supporting good behaviour. Children's very good understanding of ground rules and codes of conduct is demonstrated at times when children come together as a large group. For instance at lunchtime, when older and younger children alike are well mannered and considerate, while thoroughly enjoying the social aspect of mealtimes.

Children are cared for in an extremely inclusive environment where their individual needs are respected and each child is highly valued. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are enabled to participate fully because staff work extremely closely with parents and other professionals to ensure effective individual support is in place. Staff's knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities is excellent and they have an extremely good awareness of the increase in cultural diversity among families in the local area. This is demonstrated by the excellent strategies and resources that are in place to support children for whom English is an additional language, enabling them to quickly settle in the nursery and promoting their self esteem. Inclusion is promoted with children most effectively. For example, all staff are proficient in the use of sign language, which is used with children in a variety of contexts, such as when singing songs and at circle time. This results in children who are learning very well, that there are other ways of communicating with each other and they are very confident as they sign each others names, the days of the week, and different colours.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered. Children take part in interesting activities that develop their awareness of their own and other communities and cultures. Activities that explore customs and traditions are made meaningful by relating these to the backgrounds of staff and children, and linking these to children's own experiences.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funded nursery education is outstanding. They are very well informed about the progress their children are making towards the early learning goals, having regular opportunities to meet with key workers. Excellent information is displayed that links children's participation in activities to learning and achievement. Staff provide parents with a variety of simple and effective ideas that involve

them with their children's learning, making excellent use of a prominent whiteboard to provide daily updates. For example, following activities that have focused on shape, suggesting that parents and children identify the shapes of road signs on the way home.

Staff work extremely closely with parents and carers to provide high quality care for children that ensures their individual needs are met very well. Individual care routines for babies are consistent with home and excellent communication with parents ensures that these are adjusted as children grow and develop. Parents receive excellent information about all aspects of the provision and daily feedback regarding their children's care and the activities they take part in. All documentation supporting the care of children is shared well with parents. For example, they receive individual copies of accident reports, and information regarding routines and activities, and the settings operational policies and procedures are very well displayed and available in languages other than English.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for which they provide. Space and resources are extremely well organised, providing children with a dynamic play and learning environment. Robust employment processes ensure staff working with children are suitable to do so, and staff retention is very good. This means that children benefit from a stable staff team who know them and understand their individual needs very well. Extremely good induction procedures ensure that staff have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and are knowledgeable regarding the setting's policies and procedures that support children's wellbeing. All documentation supporting the care and wellbeing of children is in place and is clearly maintained. Staffing ratios are very good, with at least one member of staff being supernumerary, ensuring that children continue to have high levels of adult support at all times, for instance when staff have their breaks. There is a strong emphasis on training and development for staff, and this ensures that children benefit from practitioners who are very enthusiastic and confident in their skills.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. There is a strong commitment to children's learning and development, and the management team are pro-active in evaluating the provision of early years education. Children benefit from a well qualified and experienced staff team, who are secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They discuss children's progress at regular team meetings, and use their knowledge of individual children extremely well when planning activities to ensure very good levels of challenge and stimulation. There are processes in place to monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals, and overall these are effective. For example, staff make good observations, and they share their knowledge of what children do very well. However, there are inconsistencies in the maintenance of some children's records with the result that these do not accurately reflect the very good progress children make in learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, recommendations were made regarding the improvement of care and nursery education. With regard to care, it was agreed to develop the operational plan, and to review the use of communal areas. The operational plan has been extensively reviewed and updated. Communal areas are bright and welcoming, and used well, for instance when children come together as a large group at mealtimes.

With regard to nursery education, it was agreed to ensure that information regarding children is accessible to parents, and to review processes of planning and assessment. Parents are now very well informed regarding their children's progress in learning. Curriculum planning is effective and ensures that all children have a very good balance of activities that promote learning in all areas. Processes of assessment are in place and are overall effective, with staff having a very good understanding of individual children's progress. However, assessment records are not consistently maintained and so do not reflect children's good progress.

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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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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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 processes of monitoring children's learning, in order that records reflect the good progress they are making in all areas.

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