

Little Saints Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	300901
Inspection date	13 December 2007
Inspector	Jill Lee
Setting Address	School House, Hillfoot Road, Totley, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S17 4AP
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Registered person	Little Saints Nursery
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 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?

Little Saints Nursery was registered originally in 1972. It operates from the old caretaker's house in the grounds of Totley All Saints Primary School in the Totley area of Sheffield. It is managed by a committee of parents, representatives of the school and other interested people. The nursery serves the local area and has established links with Totley All Saints and Totley County Primary schools.

Children are cared for in two playrooms on the ground and first floor of the building. They have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery opens each weekday during term time from 08.00 to 15.20. A breakfast club is available from 08.00 to 8.50.

The nursery is registered to provide 17 places for children between the ages of two and five years. There are currently 47 children on roll, of whom 27 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language.

There are eight staff employed to work directly with the children, all of whom have an appropriate early years qualification. The nursery is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children relish their time in the fresh air. The outdoor environment is described as the 'third nursery room', planned to extend children's imagination and exploration. Staff have developed weather boxes and outdoor treasure boxes to enhance children's outdoor play experiences. Children build their own balancing line with blocks and make large structures with boxes and pipes. They enjoy den building and move logs and large stones to create new 'special places' for pretend play. For example, the football goal becomes a tent. Children organise a picnic and pretend to make a camp fire to cook their food. They find a pair of correctly sized Wellington boots, from the boot box, if they want to dig in the soil or paddle in puddles. Staff promote many opportunities for robust physical exercise, helping children develop confidence to try out new challenges. Children climb confidently, enjoy riding the bikes, develop ball skills and dance with ribbon sticks. They have music and movement sessions in the school hall, where they learn to use their bodies with creativity and imagination.

Children thrive because staff follow highly effective practices, which meet their physical, nutritional and health needs. Health and hygiene procedures are impeccably implemented. The exceptional adult support and guidance helps children to gain an excellent understanding of why good hygiene practices are important. This actively increases their ability to manage their own personal care. For example, they visit the toilet independently, wash their own hands and help staff to prepare the table for snack time. They can get dry clothes independently if they get wet playing and regularly help to wash the toys. Staff are thoroughly vigilant in ensuring that arrangements for first aid and administering medication are clearly agreed in writing with parents.

Snack and meal times are relaxed, highly enjoyable, social occasions, which are used extremely successfully to maximise opportunities for social development. Children are involved in helping prepare an excellent range of highly nutritious snacks that appeal to their preferences and very successfully meet their individual dietary requirements. In planned activities and everyday conversations children learn which foods are good for them and which, like those 'with lots of sugar', are 'only for occasional treats'. Children think about the different textures of food, for example when cooked, raw, whole or grated. Staff work closely with both children and parents to encourage healthy choices for their packed lunch boxes. Children plant vegetables to harvest.

Children are made to feel very special and important. They are cared for by staff who know them exceptionally well. Supportive interactions encourage children's all round development. Staff have confidence to stand back and observe children, knowing intuitively when interaction is helpful. They liaise closely with parents, so that they are alert and responsive to individual needs. Children's emotional well-being is fostered very successfully; they know their own mind and very confidently express their own needs and wishes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's understanding of safety is promoted well by staff. They consistently reinforce limits and boundaries within everyday activities, so that children develop high levels of independence in their play. Staff routinely reinforce safe practice, for example, when going down the stairs or using the staplers and sellotape dispenser. Children know they must always hold hands with a partner as they walk across to the school hall. They talk about the need to take care on the icy bark chippings. They consider how to lift heavy equipment to make dens and to take care not to trap their fingers in the folding frames used. Staff reinforce the rules for special events, like the nativity play in the local church. Children learn to keep their environment safe, as they tidy away the toys when they finish with them. Well planned activities promote children's awareness of wider health and safety issues, like safety in the sun.

Children use the play environment very purposefully, accessing all areas of the environment with safety and independence. An exceptionally well considered range of good quality resources is stored at child height, so that children can select them freely. Appropriate risk assessments are conducted and practice is consistently evaluated, increasing all children's safe participation in everyday activities. The nursery has a clearly defined security policy and there is clear planning for safe evacuation in an emergency.

Staff protect children and keep them safe. They help children to feel confident to make their needs known and sensitively establish supportive relationships with parents. The child protection policy has been recently updated, but this has not been included in the information for parents. Appropriate procedures for recording any concerns are in place, fully understood by staff and explained to parents, so that children's welfare is safeguarded. All staff are not fully familiar with the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, although access to training is planned.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children flourish in the welcoming and child-focussed nursery environment. Their interest and curiosity is stimulated, so that they are motivated to learn and explore. Staff know them extremely well and are highly attentive to their individual needs and interests. The nursery environment is vibrant and interesting, but also creates space for quiet absorption and contemplation. The daily routine is relaxed, allowing children to share and absorb experiences at their own pace. Caring relationships nurture high levels of confidence in children. They are busy and contented in their play.

Staff observe children meticulously to discover their current interests and what engages them in their play. This helps them to plan a wealth of highly enjoyable experiences and very successfully base planning of activities around their observations of what children enjoy doing. They resourcefully extend children's knowledge, making learning lots of fun. The balance between adult-led and child prompted learning is excellent. Staff allow children extensive time to explore independently, undisturbed and absorbed. Much of the stimulus for their play is provided by the outdoor environment and the excellent range of open-ended play resources. For example, they become fully engrossed in role play, as they act out and develop their own 'stories' in the play-house. They transport resources with the wheelbarrow and build larger structures with crates and pipes to make dens or to extend experiments.

Their creativity is nurtured as they mix paints, create collage pictures, make crackers and sparkly Christmas hats. They participate enthusiastically and develop a keen sense of rhythm as they sing and make music. They observe the world around them closely, as they make collages and observational drawings of leaves, collected on their autumn walks. They look at the quality of different materials, their decomposition in the ground and recycling. They access many natural and scientific resources in the treasure baskets.

Children are highly enthusiastic, inquisitive and motivated to learn because staff provide a very wide range of purposeful, well-planned opportunities in the daily environment. Staff observe and support their play skilfully, enabling them to explore independently and select resources freely. They listen actively to what children say. The learning experiences of younger children are enriched by versatile activity planning and assessment based upon the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teaching helps children to make rapid progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a full understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how to help children to learn and progress. Children are highly motivated to learn through the rich and varied experiences planned, which reflect and extend their own experiences and interests. The environment is successfully organised to promote children's independent choices, allowing them to come back to activities 'day in and day out'. Activities are extremely well-matched to children's learning needs, so that their interest is sustained. Children show very high levels of concentration with activities they enjoy. Staff interact skilfully with children, using open questions to stimulate their curiosity and extend their learning.

Children are confident, informative communicators. Staff introduce new language into planning, so that the quality of children's questions and observations is good. They learn to listen very attentively. They recognise and practise writing their own name and become interested in the sounds of letters. Children love reading stories and choosing books freely to read to each other. They share lively, interactive story times. Children begin to use factual books to extend their knowledge, for example, about natural materials. They learn to count in everyday routines, like counting the stairs as they go up and down. They investigate mathematical ideas, as they estimate how easily the water will run down the pipes, work out how much shiny paper is needed to wrap the cracker and how best to transport heavy objects. They assess which Wellington boots will fit their feet and whether the dressing up outfit is too small. Staff actively encourage children to solve problems for themselves within their play.

Children experiment with different media, like ice, and explore their own creative ideas. They spend much of their day outdoors, which excites their interest in the natural world and changing seasons. They use a range of materials for construction purposes. They dig, plant and find lots of mini-beasts in their garden. They plan environmental walks and conduct transport surveys.

Staff have established comprehensive systems to assess each child's progress, using both spontaneous and planned observations. Staff place high value on children's active involvement in their own learning. Monitoring procedures are both continuous and rigorous. Observations and assessments are used very effectively by staff to support children's individual needs and to guide planning for next steps in their learning. Children's progress is linked to the Stepping Stones, so that planning for next steps systematically reflects all areas of their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a very strong sense of belonging to the nursery. They participate actively in daily routines and make choices about their play. Children's individual needs are supported sensitively, in close cooperation with parents. Each child's individuality is recognised and valued, which helps them to develop high self-esteem. For example, signs are written in Polish and English to reflect different home languages. Children show pride as they display their work. Children make very good friendships at nursery and enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff.

Children's behaviour is very good. They enjoy an environment in which staff praise and reward good behaviour, so that children learn to feel very positive about themselves. Staff model skills and consistently reinforce expected behaviour, so that children understand the difference between right and wrong. They receive 'smiley face stickers' as rewards for kind or caring behaviour. They learn to be respectful of others when they are speaking at group time. Children are reminded to keep their 'thinking heads' on, so that they learn to listen carefully to instructions. They understand why it is important to help keep the play environment tidy, to share toys and learn to take turns in games. Children are confident in staff help to resolve any difficulties.

Children enjoy regular outings, to explore their local environment. Appropriately planned activities and resources help raise their awareness of other cultures and abilities. For example, they draw pictures of mosques, make Eid cards and paint Mehndi patterns on their hands. Children participate in fund raising activities. Staff create an environment in which children make an active contribution to the everyday life of the nursery. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents' relationships with staff are relaxed and friendly. Policies are kept in the 'parent cupboard', so they are always readily accessible. Parents are well informed about their child's daily activities and experiences. Staff use the 'home book' to share information and have developed use of 'e mail' communication, where parents do not regularly collect their own child. Questionnaires are issued asking them to share their views and comments. Parents know how to raise any concerns and feel very comfortable to do so. The provider is fully aware of current guidance relating to dealing with complaints, although the complaints policy does not fully reflect this. The contact details of the regulator are made available to parents. A system for the recording of complaints is in place, but not in a form which readily enables appropriate sharing with parents.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Planning is displayed and parents are well informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum and areas of learning. Photographs are used well, both in displays and children's records, to give parents insight into the varied activities which support their child's progress. A settling-in report is issued after a term and parents are able to add to this. Parents are able to access, but are not actively encouraged to contribute to, their child's ongoing development record. Each child has their own 'photo-book' record. The 'home book' enables daily sharing of information but is not used actively to link home and nursery experiences in planning. Regular newsletters keep parents updated about nursery issues and current topics. Staff share information about children's progress each day and a formal parents' evening is planned annually.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The compact space within the small nursery is organised extremely effectively. Creative and very accessible storage of a wide range of stimulating resources promotes children's choices and enhances their opportunities for independent learning. Staff are deployed very well to support individual needs, ensuring appropriate levels of care and supervision at all times.

Leadership and management is good. The staff group is strong, cohesive and very committed to the children. They are very 'reflective practitioners' and identify this as a key strength of the nursery. All staff contribute actively to planning and to the review of policies and practice. Systems for ongoing self-evaluation are well established, helping staff to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. Systematic observations of children are highly effective in helping staff to plan for next steps in their learning. There are clear systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are effectively implemented, so that children's welfare is safeguarded. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that staff are suitably skilled and experienced to work with children. Procedures are in place to ensure that no person who is not vetted may have sole charge of children. Regular staff monitoring and appraisal contributes to the identification of training needs. All required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place. Parents' wishes regarding their child's care clearly influence day-to-day practice and clear written agreements are recorded.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery was asked to extend the range of games and programmes available for children to use on the computer. Staff have provided a wide range of activities to help raise children's interest in information technology and to develop their skills. Children are able to access the computer freely, according to their interest, so that their learning opportunities are significantly enhanced.

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

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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

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure all staff are fully familiar with the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and that updated child protection information is clearly shared with parents
- update the complaints policy, so that it clearly reflects current requirements, and ensure that the record can readily be shared with parents.

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):

- consider ways to enable parents to contribute their own observations and share more actively in their child'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