

Down On The Farm

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY348665
Inspection date	10 September 2007
Inspector	Josephine Mary Hammick
Setting Address	Norton Brook Farm, Grafton, HEREFORD, HR2 8ED
Telephone number	01981 251185
E-mail	
Registered person	Down On The Farm
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?

Down on the Farm Nursery opened in 2007 and operates from two rooms in a purpose-built building. It is situated on a working farm on the outskirts of Hereford. A maximum of 15 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 17.00 for 50 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery is registered to care for 15 children at any one time, of which six are babies aged from three months to two years, and nine two- to five-year-olds. There are currently 35 children on roll, with four children in receipt of nursery education funding for three- and four-year-olds. Children come from a wide area, as most of their parents travel to work in or around the county. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, nearly all hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and is supported by a mentor teacher from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy and are generally protected from infection because staff have procedures in place to protect them. For example, tables are wiped prior to being used for snack and meal times and cloths are laundered daily. However, although the use of antibacterial spray is part of the procedure, some routines are overlooked. Examples include: the changing mat, pushchairs and high chairs are not cleaned effectively. Consequently children are at risk from cross-infection.

Children are well cared for in the event of an accident. Sufficient staff hold first aid qualifications to enable them to deal with accidents effectively. Appropriate documentation is kept and shared with parents to safeguard children, including reporting of accidents and administration of medicines. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through regular routines for washing their hands before snacks and lunch times, after using the toilet and playing outside.

Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday practical experiences. At snack time children enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables together with toast, low sugar juice and milk. Snack menus are varied so that children have many opportunities to experience different tastes and textures. Although parents provide packed lunches for their children, they are learning to make healthy choices about the foods they eat through discussions with staff and through planned activities to promote the 'five a day' message. For example, part of the garden is laid down to raised vegetable plots. The children prepare the soil, plant seeds and take care of their seedlings. They watch their plants mature and enjoy tasting their efforts. So far the children have enjoyed peas, potatoes, beans and pumpkins. They watch with delight as their swede seeds start to emerge. At other times, the children walk across to the farm garden to pick raspberries or squeeze oranges for their snack.

All children benefit from the emphasis on physical development and outside play. They enjoy a range of indoor and outdoor activities which promote their physical development and extend learning into the outside environment. For example, they frequently play outside using a range of equipment such as tractors, building bricks, sand and water tables. Children relish their daily walk around the farm to see the animals, experience the wider environment and to witness the changing seasons. Even in wet weather, they equip themselves with Wellington boots and raincoats and enjoy the fresh air. The theme of camping is extended into the garden where a tent has been positioned for the children to play in. Music and movement sessions ensure that children benefit from opportunities to stretch and let off steam when they can't go outside. The provision of resources ensures that activities provide sufficient physical challenges to children of all ages. Children also have opportunities to use cutters, scissors, paintbrushes and other small tools to develop their manipulative skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a well-maintained and child-focused environment. Staff prepare the room with a sound range of appropriate resources before children arrive each day to create a stimulating environment for them. Children are able to access a range of developmentally appropriate toys and equipment which ensure they play safely and are happily occupied.

Children's safety is enhanced by well thought out procedures which are used to restrict access to the setting. For example, access is restricted into the nursery by the door being locked, visitors being supervised at all times and outside gates being padlocked on the outside. However, some domestic safety measures are overlooked; for example, the door into the kitchen is often left open putting children's well-being at risk. Risk assessments have been carried out for the premises and a high adult-to-child ratio is adhered to at all times. This helps children to remain safe. Children's safety in case of fire is generally promoted. Regular discussions and fire drills help children to learn how they could evacuate the premises safely to protect themselves. However, some fire exits are not easily accessed because the approach to these areas are used for storage. A delay in evacuation puts children's welfare at risk. The group have a written policy on child protection and are aware of their duty to protect children. This protects children from harm or neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are happy to attend, they enjoy their time in the setting. Children throughout the setting are happy, confident and have built secure relationships with each other and staff. They are provided with a good balance of child-initiated and group projects to ensure that children have access to a range of activities. For example, stories and songs during circle time ensure that children have time to be quiet and rest; the painting and gluing activities stimulate interest and extend learning in a fun and informal way. The children, although very young, are interested in what is available to them and demonstrate a basic understanding of the overall theme.

Children's play and learning is supported by staff who have a sound understanding of how children learn, making links with the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three' frameworks. Staff consistently interact with children to support their learning and play. Children's confidence and self-esteem are developed through the attention and praise they receive for their achievements. Staff value children's creations, displaying them attractively on wall displays or by including them in their progress files.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children enjoy being in the setting. They are interested in the range of activities provided. They concentrate and persevere well for their age, whether playing alone or from interaction with their peers or adults. Children are learning to express opinions or suggest ideas. Staff ensure children have plenty of opportunities for conversation and discussions, while the less articulate children have good support to help them join in.

Children enjoy stories and rhymes. They listen attentively and contribute to discussions about features of stories; for example, they join in with repetitive text and point out characters and situations in the story 'We're all going on a bear hunt'. Story sacks help children to concentrate and enjoy different aspects of stories. Children sing tunefully and with enthusiasm; rhymes are used to reinforce aspects of the topic. Children also enjoy mark-making in different contexts, whether they are forming patterns in sand and paint or writing 'postcards' during the theme of people who help us.

Counting and number recognition activities are practical and fun for children. Four-year-olds can count confidently beyond ten. During routines, play activities and discussions, children get opportunities to consolidate their understanding of one-to-one correspondence. Children enjoy

working out simple number problems, such as how many more bricks are needed before their tower topples over, or how many bears in each container to make the scales balance. Stories and rhymes are also used to support children's awareness of simple number operations. Staff encourage children to check their answers so that, for example, they are supported to count using their fingers.

Children are interested in how things work. They explore different materials, such as wet and dry sand. They find out how different construction toys and other items fit together. They enjoy using technology, for example, by using the computer and the compact disc player. Children are supported in handling tools such as scissors. Children design and make their own buildings, selecting bricks to fit together. They test their models out to see which fit and which do not. Children use mathematical language to describe their towers' appearance and features.

Children move confidently. During a music session they competently follow different actions, stretching up, lying down, wriggling and moving in different directions. A varied range of collage and creative materials encourage children's imaginative painting and craft work. They draw and paint expressively, trying out different techniques and using colour well. Role play areas are available throughout the session to enable children to develop their own ideas. The scenarios that are provided are linked with the theme, realistically resourced and promote children's meaningful play.

Planning and assessment support children's learning. Topics are interesting and relevant to children. Staff spend time researching topics to ensure ideas are appropriate. During the current topic on holidays and camping, children recall their own family experiences during discussions and through art and craft work and modelling activities. Plans have clear learning outcomes which are followed through organised, focused activities. Assessment procedures ensure children's progress whilst they attend the pre-school. Parental contributions and early observations help staff to compile an initial profile on each child, but from then on assessments are based on formal observations of children during play and activities. Staff have systems to check children's progress in relation to the stepping stones and early learning goals; they adapt activities to suit children's differing levels of skill or individual need.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual personalities and needs are known and respected within the setting. The group seek a range of information from parents such as children's special interests, festivals that they celebrate at home and things that are special to the family. This information is used to ensure that children are cared for by staff who work with parents to meet their individual needs and also ensures that all children are valued and included in the life of the setting. Children's play is supported by resources which are aimed at promoting positive images of people from a range of cultures. For example, there are dolls, books, role play materials and pictures promoting positive images of diversity.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are recognised and supported by caring staff. Daily records are kept of children's progress and routines and shared with parents and outside agencies to ensure that the children's changing needs are recognised and can continue to be met.

Children behave very well, care for each other and freely share and take turns. For example, when playing at the water tray, children share different sized containers and take turns using

the equipment. They are developing a sound understanding of right and wrong and are able to play happily within clearly set boundaries. Children benefit from sensitive settling-in procedures which are based around their individual needs, to support them in the transition between home and the setting. For example, parents and carers are actively encouraged to stay with their children until they are settled. This helps children to feel secure and confident in the group.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. The well thought out information booklet includes information on the Foundation Stage framework and the six areas of learning. Photographs and labels on displays help parents and carers to learn about what educational aspects of learning are possible in any activity. Parents are always welcome to view or discuss their child's diary or progress informally. However, few parents are actively invited to use this option to become involved and enhance their own child's learning.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The premises are effectively organised and good use is made of the space available. All staff work well together and demonstrate a commitment for creating a learning environment that stimulates children of all ages. Children are cared for by suitably qualified staff who have been appropriately vetted to ensure that they are suitable and have sufficient skills and knowledge to work with children.

Policies and procedures are clear, comprehensive and updated annually. Staff become familiar with their contents by completing an effective induction programme to ensure children are well cared for. There is a commitment to staff training and working with other professionals, such as those from the local authority. As a result, children benefit from practices which are in line with current ideas and legislation.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. There is a commitment by staff to promote learning in all areas; they are sufficiently competent within their roles and have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. These skills and knowledge are supporting the children's learning and development adequately. However, there are no formal procedures for staff to monitor their effectiveness or to plan the long term development of the provision, enabling all to work together to support the children's well-being and quality of the service.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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 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):

- ensure effective hygiene procedures are in place to ensure risk of cross-infection is minimised
- ensure children's access to the kitchen is inaccessible at all times
- ensure all exits are accessible and clear of hazards.

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):

- improve existing procedures for sharing children's progress with parents
- extend existing management skills in order to effectively steer the development of the setting and staff.

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