

Lucy Locket Kindergarten @ Mount Carmel

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205330
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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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Lucy Locket Kindergarten at Mount Carmel opened in 1992 and is one of two nurseries owned by this provider. It operates from buildings adjacent to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, close to Redditch town centre. A maximum of 42 children may attend at any one time. The Kindergarten is open each week day from 08:00 to 18:00 for 50 weeks of the year. Children over the age of eighteen months share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Babies have their own separate enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 67 children aged from eight months to under five years on roll. Of these, 28 children receive funding for nursery education. This includes funded two-year-olds. Children attend from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports children who speak English as an additional language and has procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The kindergarten employs 15 staff including the manager. Of these, 12 are qualified and three are working towards a qualification. The setting has achieved a bronze award for quality assurance and also receives support from a local authority mentor teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is well protected by the effective levels of hygiene that are maintained within the nursery. Regular cleaning routines and practices are followed to reduce the possible risks of infection and staff ensure that all equipment, toys and areas used by children are kept clean. Positive steps are taken to encourage children to begin to take responsibility for their own hygiene needs and sensitive support is used during nappy changing. Children access toilet areas independently and colourful hand washing posters and symbols are used to remind them to wash their hands regularly. Children's health and medication needs are clearly recorded and all staff are first aid trained, ensuring that minor accidents are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner.

Children benefit from a healthy diet of freshly prepared and cooked meals and snacks and are encouraged to drink frequently throughout the day. Hot meals are freshly prepared by a trained cook, using fresh ingredients that do not contain high levels of artificial additives, sugar or salt. Menus are produced to give parents information about meal choices, and these include dishes from different cultures such as chilli and rice, chicken curry, lasagne and spaghetti bolognaise. There is also a wholesome range of morning and afternoon snacks provided and these include such things as toast, cereals, dried fruit, cheese and crackers. Fresh or dried fruit is provided most days and careful consideration has been given to ensure that all food provided is appropriate to children's individual dietary needs. Mealtimes are organised effectively, with children eating together sociably in their care rooms. Babies and toddlers are encouraged to feed themselves using appropriate training cutlery and there is lots of chatter as children enjoy their food and each other's company. Many learning opportunities are provided to help children understand the benefits of healthy eating. For example, children grow vegetables in the nursery garden and often help prepare snacks.

Pre-school aged children use the nursery's outdoor facilities with real excitement and show exceptional control as they balance, climb and scramble over logs. Wellingtons and waterproofs allow them to play outside in all weathers and the nursery garden is used to best effect in helping children to be physically confident and independent. Three and four-year-olds use their bodies creatively as they learn new and exciting ways to move, such as balancing on a bridge made from planks and crates or jumping and climbing over wooden logs. Four-year-olds show very highly developed skills as they run and climb and they often use the natural environment creatively as they make up their own games. A small paved area provides space to use bikes and push along cars and children show a keen sense of personal space as they work out how many children can balance side-by-side on wooden planks. Small equipment such as balls, hoops and gardening tools help children to develop their co-ordination, while daily use of paint, construction and dough tools ensure they have good hand and finger control. Staff understand the physical needs of the youngest children attending and provide space, time and resources to support their development. Ball pools provide support and fun for the youngest children and they also have use of an outside garden area. However, this is mainly used during the summer months and so babies do not benefit from regular outside play experiences and plenty of fresh air. Domestic armchairs are provided to help children learn to pull themselves up, stand and develop early walking skills and staff carefully support this. Lots of natural materials, shape sorters and sound toys are provided and these help babies learn to grasp, hold and use their fingers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in well organised and attractive care rooms which offer lots of stimulation. Many colourful displays, children's craft work and posters are displayed around the nursery and this creates a very child-friendly environment. The nursery is well resourced with a wealth of different playthings provided, natural as well as plastic, and these underpin children's learning. Toys are laid out attractively to allow children to easily choose what they want to play with and all equipment and resources meet current safety standards and are regularly checked.

Children are kept safe due to staff's keen awareness of safety issues. The premises are checked daily and safety has been carefully considered and all possible risks minimised. For example, high level door locks ensure children cannot leave their care rooms unsupervised and central heating radiators have safety features. A detailed risk assessment is used to carry out daily safety checks and safety is often discussed at staff meetings to ensure that it remains a high priority within the nursery. Effective security measures protect children from unauthorised visits and lost and uncollected child policies enable staff to respond appropriately should either incident occur. Children are closely supervised and are beginning to understand about what is dangerous and how to keep themselves safe. They know the procedure for evacuating the building in an emergency, understand not to run inside in case they hurt themselves or others and know to be careful when balancing on logs and planks. Gentle guiding away helps babies and toddlers to understand such things as not to stand too close to doorways and they sleep safely, comfortably and are frequently monitored.

Staff have a good understanding of how to safeguard children, and recognise that this is their first priority. They are vigilant, aware of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and know the appropriate procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child. All staff have received specific training on child protection and they have easy access to detailed policies and reference guides to help them implement correct procedures when necessary. Staff's willingness to record existing injuries and incidents and discuss this with parents, further protects and safeguards children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, settled and involved in a broad range of activities which support their development and learning. Staff develop warm and caring relationships with the children in their care and this is very evident. A keyworker system is used effectively to provide care and learning for each individual child and daily diaries develop close links between home and the nursery and provide opportunities to share information about children's care. Staff gain information about young children's individual routines, needs and preferences and this provides a continuity of care that ensures children feel secure and nurtured. However, there is limited information gained about young children's developmental starting points and this hinders staff's ability to effectively plan ahead to meet all their future learning needs. Within the baby and toddler rooms, children respond enthusiastically to the interesting and stimulating activities provided under the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Toys are placed within easy reach, and treasure baskets containing natural materials and household items such as a wooden pastry brush, help young children to explore the world around them. Sound toys and lots of fun activities such as singing, rocking to music, bubbles and jelly play also provide stimulating fun ways to discover new things.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making exceptional progress because teaching is effective in building on all children's current knowledge, experience and skills. A wealth of quality well-planned learning activities are provided which enrich children's learning experiences and encourage them to be excited and motivated learners. Staff are alert to the different ways that children show their interests and ideas and use these insights exceptionally well. For example, planned activities often reflect children's own interests and learning ideas such as role play created around a child's experience at hospital. A well considered balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities provide first-hand, positive experiences which are introduced in familiar contexts. Curriculum planning is detailed, shows a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children will be guided towards making progress within the six areas of learning. Staff complete regular observations and assessments of children's learning and development and these are used very effectively to plan children's next steps and to set new challenges. Staff value children's individual personalities and help them to develop a positive approach to learning. They are attentive and responsive, give clear explanations and offer questions that make children think. As a result children are interested, fully involved and learning.

Staff develop children's personal, social and emotional development exceptionally well, using it to underpin the rest of the learning and to ensure children become confident and self-assured. They are curious and inquisitive, are given choices in what to do and often show excitement and pleasure as they play and learn. For example, children showed great excitement when successfully completing a simple computer game and sang and danced spontaneously as part of their imaginary play. They behave very well, responding positively to the clear guidelines and expectations set by staff. Pictures and symbols are used to best effect in helping children to understand the rules of working together harmoniously and these encourage children to develop self-control. Signs for good sitting, good listening and hand signals such as 'thumbs up' also ensure children know when they have done well. Each day a child is chosen to help with simple tasks such as handing out cutlery at lunch time, and they wear a 'special helper' badge with pride. Reward stickers are widely used and are placed on the child's jumper and in their home diaries so that they can share their achievements with their parents. Children's self-care and independence is supported extremely well and they show skill in putting on their own water-proofs and wellingtons for outside play.

Children are making excellent progress in the area of communication, language and literacy. They are confident speakers who talk freely and expressively at circle times, during activities and story times. Four-year-olds are quick to share what they know and are beginning to develop strong negotiating skills. They develop a love of stories as they sit quietly to look at good quality books, and often make their own. Excellent methods are used to help children learn that words have real meaning and some older children are able to recognise simple words, such as the labels on toy boxes. A phonic system is used very effectively to help children to link sounds to letters and a wealth of inspiring activities are used to help them make marks and develop early writing skills. Children have excellent opportunities to recognise their name and some four-year-olds can form some recognisable letters and write their own name.

Children show they are becoming confident mathematicians as they count, match and sort. Counting and number recognition is threaded through most activities. They often count the number of children sitting at circle time, count up and down on their fingers during number rhymes and excitedly count back from 10 when pretending to be rockets ready for 'blast off'. They see lots of numbers displayed around their learning room and an excellent range of

mathematical resources are used to help children understand how numbers change when one or more is added or taken away. They measure and use mathematical language spontaneously as they play, using words like 'large', 'small' and 'more than' and show a good understanding of shape and how to link these to familiar objects.

Children show well developed levels of understanding in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world. Excellent opportunities are provided for them to explore, question and investigate and this results in children being excited to learn. Simple experiments such as finding out how long it takes to fill a hole in the garden with water allows children to discover new things in a fun and stimulating way. There are lots of sensory and tactile materials provided such as wet sand, corn silk, rice and dough and these help children to ask questions about why things happen. They learn about the natural environment as they find worms, slugs and other insects in the garden, feed the birds and plant vegetables in the nursery garden. Children have excellent opportunities to design and make things and show real skill in using simple computer games to count and recognise numbers and letters.

Children's creativity is highly valued as they paint, make up their own games and respond enthusiastically to music. Their art work is widely displayed around their care room to show it is valued and they use their imaginations widely as they explore familiar roles and learn new skills through their imaginary play. For example, children pretended to wash each other's hair, groom their nails and put wax in their hair when pretending to be hairdressers. They often use musical instruments, experimenting with the sounds and rhythms they make as they play along to songs and nursery rhymes and dance freely to taped music. They join in enthusiastically with action songs and often sing spontaneously as they play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children show a strong sense of belonging in the nursery, where their individuality is valued and they are made feel good about themselves. Staff provide positive support, praise and encouragement and there is plenty of time for babies and toddlers to be cuddled. An effective keyworker system is used to observe and plan for each child's individual needs and this helps children to feel confident and safe within the setting. Staff give babies their full attention, actively respond to their smiles and the noises they make and use gentle tones to help them feel secure and well cared for. Children are confident and are developing good self-esteem due to the high level of praise they receive. Reward stickers are used widely with toddlers and 3 and 4 year-olds and these are placed on children's daily diaries so that they know when they have done well and can share this with their parents. Staff consistently and sensitively enforced behaviour rules, give clear instructions and praise. As a result, children behave well and learn to share, take turns and work together harmoniously.

Children broaden their experiences through well developed themes that help them to look at and investigate their own cultures and the beliefs of other people. They learn to respect one another and to share their home experiences and this helps them to recognise similarities and differences in the way people live. Positive images of different family and cultural backgrounds are displayed around the nursery and children celebrate cultural festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali in a meaningful way. Consideration for others less fortunate is developed as children raise money for charity and they also sponsor a child in India. Staff are confident in using a variety of methods to meet the needs of children and there is a strong commitment to working closely with parents and in liaising with other relevant professionals when necessary. This allows for the early identification of any additional needs a child may have. A trained and

effective Special Educational Needs Coordinator helps ensure that all children are included and each child's individual needs are met. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. A strong and purposeful partnership with parents is developed as they share their knowledge about the care of their children and are given clear information about the progress they are making. Parents are encouraged to talk freely to staff and key workers and daily diaries are used exceptionally well in ensuring there is a two-way flow of information between the nursery and home. Notice boards and displays are used effectively to keep parents informed and both curriculum and activity plans are displayed in each care room for parents to see. Staff work very effectively with parents of three and four-year-olds, providing high quality information about the nursery education and ensuring they feel confident in helping to support their children's learning at home. Special assemblies are held to allow parents to share in what their children have been learning and regular forum and curriculum evenings are held which allow parents to gain a greater insight into the educational programme being offered. Parent's meetings are also organised twice a year so that parents can discuss their child's progress and each week they take home story books to share with their children. Parents speak confidently and knowledgeably about the setting and what their children are taught and make very positive comments about how they feel welcome and an important part of the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is supported by enthusiastic staff and strong management. They have regular staff meetings, work well as a team and have a shared commitment to providing good quality care and education. Time and space are used effectively and the keyworker system is very effective in ensuring that children have an attentive and affectionate key person who helps them to develop a strong sense of belonging. Robust employment and staff checking procedures ensure that children are protected and staff are well qualified and keep up-to-date with best practice through regular training. A well considered and organised operational plan is in place and this includes all the necessary documents, policies and records needed to ensure children's health, safety and well-being. Detailed record keeping identifies the individual needs of children and ensures parents are kept fully informed.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The setting is run by a well qualified and experienced owner/manager who is a qualified teacher and has recently obtained Early Years Professional Status. She fully involves staff in the decision making and planning processes and guides her staff by suggesting, modelling and sharing good teaching practice. This ensures staff work as an effective, professional team. There is a strong commitment to evaluating both the nursery and the educational programme offered and this ensures that practice is regularly reviewed, well considered and adapted to reflect the changing developmental needs of children. New ideas gained from training are used effectively and this has led to new initiatives being introduced, such as expanding the use of the nursery garden and improving children's understanding of letter sounds. Detailed training plans show a commitment to on-going staff development and yearly appraisal and comprehensive induction procedures reflect the enthusiasm and commitment shown by all staff. Close links are made with other early years professionals and parent's views are sought through questionnaires, forum evenings and daily chats at arrival and collection times. High levels of commitment are shown by both the management and staff who work closely together to focus on providing rich learning experiences that help children to make outstanding progress towards the six areas of learning.

Self evaluation and reflection have begun to form a major part of the nursery's practice and the manager has a clear vision for the future. Overall the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to make improvements relating to how the administration of children's medication is recorded and to improve the planning of activities for children under the age of three. In addition the setting agreed to carry out and provide Ofsted with incident recording procedures for significant events and improve their accident records.

Good progress has been made overall since the last inspection. The system for planning activities for the youngest children in the nursery has been carefully considered and some staff have received training on planning and implementing the 'Birth to three matters' framework. In addition, advice has been gained from the local authority development officer, who has worked with staff in the setting to improve the range of learning activities offered to babies and toddlers. This has now been extended further by introducing the Early Years Foundation Stage a few months ahead of the legal requirement. Although implementation of this is still at an early stage, new planning and assessment methods have been introduced with the aim of ensuring that children's individual development and learning is planned for within a flexible framework of learning experiences and activities. Planning is now developed for each individual child based on the observations made by key workers.

Children's health has been further protected by ensuring that medication and accident records have been improved and that these records are kept in each care room. Medication records now include written permission to administer medication and parents also sign to acknowledge the entry when they collect their child.

At the last inspection the provider was also asked to make improvements to the nursery education being offered in relation to improving the planning and frequency of outdoor learning activities.

Children's access to good quality outdoor learning activities has significantly improved since the last inspection, with children over two able to access a garden and paved area each day and during all weathers. The nursery has purchased wellingtons and rain proof clothing for all the children, who now use the outside areas with excitement and control.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. Concerns were raised about accidents in the outdoor area and these are recorded and shared with parents. This relates to National Standard 6 Safety and National Standard 14 Documentation. Concerns were also raised about behaviour management and how complaints by parents were resolved and recorded. This relates to National Standard 11 Behaviour Management and 12 Partnership with parents. We carried out an unannounced visit on 26 October 2006. As a result, the provider was required to carry out and provide Ofsted with incident recording procedures for significant events. The provider continues to be 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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):

- obtain early information about children's developmental starting points and personalities in order to effectively plan ahead to meet their future learning and developmental needs
- improve the range and frequency of outside play experiences for the youngest children in the nursery.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

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