

Apple Tree Day Care Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	650048
Inspection date	07 March 2008
Inspector	Barbara Ann Greenley
Setting Address	304 Cressing Road, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3PG
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Registered person	Just Like Home Day Nurseries Ltd
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Apple Tree Day Nursery opened in 1997 and is one of two nurseries run by Just Like Home Day Nurseries Ltd. It operates from a converted bungalow and mobile classrooms. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play. It is situated in a residential area of Braintree. A maximum of 51 children may attend the nursery at any one time, this includes 12 children who attend the after school club. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:45 until 18:00 and the after school club provides care from 15:00 until 18:00 all year round. The nursery has pets; one hamster and American snails.

There are approximately 117 children on roll. Of these 50 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider area. The nursery currently supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 17 staff. Of these, 12 members of staff, including the manager have early years qualifications and two are currently on training courses. The setting receives support from the local authority, the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA), the local Area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and the Essex Day Nurseries Association (EDNA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is actively promoted. They are encouraged to wash their hands after toileting, messy or garden play as part of their day to day routine. Staff check to ensure that the older, more independent children are cleaning their hands sufficiently. Children clearly revel in the fact that they can use the toilets on their own and feel quite 'grown-up'. Children receive appropriate medical attention as staff members have a sound understanding of the group's policies and procedures for dealing with illness, accidents and administering any medication. There are a number of staff on site who have trained in first aid and who are confident about dealing with any emergencies that may arise. Additional training has been arranged to include all members of staff, ensuring there is a depth of knowledge regarding medical procedures.

Children are well-nourished and have regular meals, snacks and drinks. Children's dietary requirements are provided by the nursery and recently a full-time cook has been employed to provide food throughout the day. This has resulted in a much improved range of food for the children and the staff praise her culinary skills. One child commented that the food was 'delicious'. Children are able to cook cakes or snacks and are beginning to understand the process of growing food. Healthy eating is now promoted with an emphasis on fresh vegetables and fruit. Children enjoy sociable meal and snack times, using real cutlery and learning how to behave at the table.

All age groups have access to a large, enclosed outside play area. Children's physical development is fostered by the provision of equipment and activities available to enhance movement and flexibility. Access to the garden is now an integral part of the day and children benefit from the facilities on offer. Children in receipt of funded early education have opportunities to use tools and equipment that promote manipulation; eye and hand coordination and competence on the large garden apparatus. They also go for walks outside of the nursery, visiting local shops and getting to know their community.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into premises that are bright, welcoming and suitable for their purpose. Children are based in a series of rooms and they identify with their own groups. The premises is safe, secure and well-maintained. The walls and ceilings are decorated with posters and mobiles. The children are able to access a wide range of toys and equipment in their rooms, stored at child-height to facilitate choice. Children benefit from using resources that are clean and in good condition. The range has been increased since the last inspection and continues to be added to when shortfalls are identified.

Children's safety is well-promoted as staff minimise the hazards and any risks on the premises to prevent accidents. Policies and procedures are in place to further protect the well-being of the children. Children are learning the principles of keeping themselves safe. They learn about road safety for their trips outside of the nursery and are given instructions by the staff when using sharp tools such as scissors. Children understand the importance of practising fire drills and the procedure is carried out on a regular basis. Younger children and babies know their boundaries and are able to move around with confidence.

Staff members have undertaken training on child protection issues and are now sure about their personal responsibility for safeguarding children and the correct referral process. This knowledge assists them to ensure the children's safety. In addition, the group's policy reflects the change from Area Child Protection Committee to Local Safeguarding Children Board. Up to date booklets and information are available for staff and parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are engaged and show the ability to concentrate as they play. Staff members talk with the children, singing together as they play ring games. They enjoy participating in group games, using the floor toys and show excitement when opportunities to climb, jump and run in the garden are presented. Some of the younger children are distracted by a poster strategically placed over the changing mat; an experienced member of staff expertly pointing out the pictures as nappies are changed. They clearly like the exchanges with the adult, laughing and talking. Staff members add 'whoops' and 'hoorays' as children master pieces of equipment. Staff members direct the younger children as they make presents for Easter and there is spontaneity as a road map, cars and small world figures are used effectively by a group of boys.

Children display the ability to make friends, share and cooperate. They are able to access the toys easily and have the opportunity to look at a broad range of books. The very young are encouraged to move around the room, pull themselves up on walking aides and communicate with staff. Bubbles are used effectively to attract attention, as bubbles burst there is a look of awe, puzzlement and excitement. Staff members reinforced language of 'where has it gone?' with hand gestures. They are rewarded with smiles and the child attempts at blowing bubbles too.

Training has been completed on the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the designated person ensures that other members of staff working with the younger children are fully aware of the aims. Development records are in place and children are monitored and assessed on a regular basis.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning of children in receipt of funded early nursery education is satisfactory. The staff members who have responsibility for delivering the Foundation Stage have completed either in-house training or modules on their qualifications course. They have also received assistance from the local authority. Children are taught in appropriately sized groups and on a one-to-one basis. The curriculum is planned to include all six areas of learning and there is a clear purpose for each activity however, there is no differentiation in the plans for the more able or less able child. Staff allow time for children to complete tasks and children are given time to discuss what they know and understand. Plans are inclusive and the special needs coordinator works with the team to ensure that resources are adapted where necessary. Children behave well and know their boundaries. Staff members work directly with the children for most of the sessions and use the resources suitably. Children are monitored and assessed and the observations used to identify children's achievements.

Children are benefiting from their increased use of the outdoor play area and their walks outside of the nursery. They clearly enjoy climbing, jumping and running. They can use tools and writing materials with a degree of skill. Children enjoy the use of the home corner and like listening to music. They are using a range of materials to produce artwork and models however, staff tend

to take the lead which results in uniformity. For example, the same colour being used to produce rabbit shapes that are already cut from templates. Artwork is not displayed carefully and there is a lack of representation of the real world. Children are not using their own imaginations to full effect. Children are using numbers in everyday play, counting on their fingers and counting toys. They are beginning to use descriptive language and realise that numbers have value for example, 'how many red straws?' and then counting them out successfully. They can recreate patterns and shapes.

Children's language skills are being extended by staff asking open-ended questions and listening to the reply. Children are happy to tell their own stories and the more able are using descriptive words correctly. Children listen to sounds and are asked to guess what had made the noise and give a description of things such as the sea, a recorder and a dog barking. Children are valued as individuals and they are able to talk about their home lives, their wishes and adventures. They demonstrate the ability to use everyday technology, select tools to complete tasks and ask questions about their environment. They have completed projects on festivals and one on their local community, visiting shops, drawing their own houses and the nursery. Children's personal, social and emotional development is strongly promoted. Children are at ease in the nursery and show that they are happy and interested in their play and learning. They are beginning to understand that the group has a structure, where they fit in, their responsibilities for things such as tidying up and friendships. Overall, children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to be aware that we have similarities and differences and are starting to value each other's abilities. There are some resources on site reflecting diversity in the community such as dolls, books and small world figures. However, the range is limited and the children in the younger age groups have little experience of the resources. Emphasis is on cartoon characters or adult influenced artwork. Staff are not always allowing children to express their own ideas and initiative. Children's opportunities to improve their self-esteem is hampered by staff who tend to complete the tasks themselves. Representations of real people, places and animals are not sufficiently featured. However, boys and girls have equal access to equipment.

There is an awareness of the needs of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. There is a designated member of staff who has completed training and she liaises with the local authority area worker. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is available for staff to reference if required.

Children behave well, respecting each other, their surroundings and the boundaries set by the staff. There is a general emphasis on positive instructions that acknowledges helpfulness and courteous behaviour. Staff members understand the behaviour policy and this ensures that they deal with children of all ages consistently.

Parents are made welcome and access information from the staff, letters and notice boards. Staff and parents complete introduction sheets on each child that are updated as they progress through the rooms. Reports are given to parents on a daily basis which staff say are appreciated and ensures that everyone is aware of the children's individual needs.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funded early nursery education is satisfactory. Parents express satisfaction with the setting and the education their children are receiving. They would recommend the 'friendliness' of the staff, that they feel 'comfortable and welcomed' and that 'the garden is very nice for the children'. However, whilst information is shared with parents regarding the curriculum, they were unable to state that they understand about the Foundation Stage and the purpose of early education. Children do not take home any work to share with their parents, therefore parents do not know the aims of the activities the children complete.

Children are able to work together and share their toys. They are learning to respect each other and value their differences. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The manager is very well qualified and has extensive experience of working in a day care setting. She is now a Level 5 practitioner and intends to achieve professional status. She has worked in childcare for 24 years. Her strong approach to the overall management of the nursery has improved standards since her appointment 18 months ago. She is very aware of her responsibilities to maintaining the National Standards and any attendant regulations.

Training remains a top priority and courses have been identified for staff to improve the care and education offered to the children. The company has a robust recruitment policy ensuring that children are safeguarded. Staff members have induction training to familiarise them with the group's expectations of good practice. They sign to acknowledge their understanding of the group's procedures. The manager is then assured that staff are treating the children consistently in accordance with the group's aims.

Children and parents benefit from the improved range of policies and procedures that are implemented by the staff. They are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in legislation. Records are kept confidential and are in order. The daily register now accurately records the times of arrival and departure of each child or the whereabouts of staff during the day. All paperwork is kept for the appropriate timescales.

Leadership and management of children in receipt of funded early nursery education is satisfactory. The manager has confidence in the room staff who are charged with the delivery of the Foundation Stage. She says the aim of the operational plan is 'to raise standards so that everyone is working in unison to provide a quality provision'. Training has been scheduled for the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage and there has been input from the local authority. The manager states that when the training is completed 'knowledge will be cascaded to all of the staff members'. Staff have regular meetings and individual assessments; these highlight future professional development issues. The manager has identified weaknesses in the pre-school rooms and is now planning to spend more time with her teaching staff to improve standards.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were five recommendations set for childcare. They have all been addressed. Firstly, staff were required to improve children's understanding of healthy eating and good personal hygiene routines. Children are now more closely supervised when hand washing and the employment of the full-time cook has greatly improved the daily diet. Children are more aware of healthy living and maintaining hygiene standards. It was also recommended that the resources were expanded to provide greater play opportunities. The manager has addressed this issue effectively and there is now a broader range of toys and equipment in the nursery. Staff were also required to increase their knowledge of safeguarding issues and update the policy to reflect organisational changes. The policy is now updated and staff have completed further training. They are now confident about their responsibilities which assists them to protect the children. The complaints policy was not reflecting current guidelines. This policy is now following the correct guidelines and ensures that parents and staff resolve any concerns about the children's care swiftly. In addition, the daily register did not accurately reflect times of arrival and departure of children and staff in each room. Again, this has been corrected and it is now easy to pinpoint, with accuracy, the whereabouts of the children and staff.

At the last inspection there were three recommendations regarding nursery education. The nursery was required to increase children's experiences of playing outside and for trips into the community. All of the children now experience more freedom to play in the fresh air and go on walks. Therefore they are deriving more fun from play in the outdoors. The curriculum also required attention to ensure that there was a broader range of activities to capture the children's imaginations. Work has taken place to ensure that the activities are improved and that the children's interest is sustained. It was also recommended that the staff improve their knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Since the inspection, staff have completed further training and are booked on new courses for the forthcoming Early Years Foundation Stage. There has also been input from the local authority. The practitioners now have a greater understanding of teaching the Early Learning Goals.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, Ofsted received a concern on 29 November 2006 regarding National Standard 6 (Safety), 7 (Health), 12 (Working in partnership with parents and carers) and 14 (Documentation).

In order to investigate this concern in relation to these National Standards the Registered Person was asked to conduct an internal investigation and provide Ofsted with a copy along with supporting records and documentation. These records demonstrate that the Registered Person had obtained relevant advice from outside agencies in this matter. As a result of the information received Ofsted is satisfied that the National Standards were met. Ofsted will be taking no further action in this matter.

The provider continues to be registered.

The provider is also 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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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):

- increase the range of resources reflecting diversity
- allow children to develop their self-esteem through praise and recognition of their achievements, decision making, increasing independence and taking the lead when playing and creating.

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):

- ensure that each activity clearly shows differentiation to enable the more able and less able child full participation and enjoyment of the resources
- allow children the freedom to use their own imaginations to produce artwork and models; using a range of mediums with visual prompts of the real world
- increase parent's awareness of the Foundation Stage, encouraging them to become involved in their children's learning by taking home work to complete.

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