

Oak Tree Kindergarten Ltd (Ashcroft Road)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	105253
Inspection date	13 November 2007
Inspector	Margaret Coyne
Setting Address	229 Ashcroft Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 9AA
Telephone number	01582 720072
E-mail	
Registered person	Oak Tree Kindergarten Ltd (Ashcroft Road)
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 outstanding. 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?

Oak Tree Kindergarten opened in 1989 and operates from a detached house in Luton, Bedfordshire. The group have access to three base rooms, an additional classroom, a kitchen, utility areas, a laundry, staff room and toilets. All children have shared access to a secure, enclosed outside area. A maximum of 52 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year.

There are currently 95 children aged from six months to under five years on roll. Of these, 30 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and come from a wide catchment area. The nursery supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 18 staff. All of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications and four staff are working towards increasing their qualification. The nursery receive support from a qualified teacher and the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through extremely well-planned daily routines. Hygiene is given a high priority at the nursery and this is reflected in their practice. Children have an excellent awareness of how and why we wash our hands and when it is important to do so. For example, before meals and snacks and after messy activities. Younger children develop their understanding through the positive role modelling of the adults and the daily routine which is practised. Children cover their mouths when coughing and know where to get tissues from to wipe their nose, putting soiled tissues in the bin. Overall, the high standard of cleanliness throughout the nursery, the highly effective nappy changing routines, toilet training methods and the sick child policy all contribute to the children's good health. This exemplary practice ensures children are protected from infection. A high level of staff hold first aid certificates and are confident to administer first aid to the children to prevent them becoming distressed or incur further infection. A high level of staff also hold a food hygiene certificate.

Staff are well informed about children's health issues and enhanced records and documents are in place. Meticulous records are kept for the administration of medication and to inform parents of any accidents that have occurred to their child. Children are protected by staff's understanding and implementation of policies and procedures designed to maintain health and promote healthy choices. Written consent from parents allows children to receive emergency medical care if required and to administer medication. Parents understand that children must not attend if they are ill or infectious and if a child becomes poorly whilst at the nursery, they are given comfort until they can be collected.

The Nursery offers children three meals a day dependent on their hours of attendance. These are all prepared on the premises and are of a consistently high standard. The cook plans the menus over a four week rolling program and the meals cover the five food groups comprehensively. All meals are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the children's dietary needs and that they can continue to enjoy their meals. Children are seen to be enjoying their meals. An extremely pleasant, happy and social occasion is created for the children as they gain lovely social skills. Staff sit with the children encouraging conversations and good manners. Children help to set the tables and have many worthwhile opportunities to take part in some food preparation for themselves. This helps them learn about food that is good for us and food hygiene. They have opportunities to serve themselves which develops their self-esteem and independence. Children's dietary needs are well documented and known to the cook and staff. The group have regularly received the Healthy Eating award for under fives and this is clearly reflected in all aspects of their practice. Children have access to fresh drinks throughout the day. Younger children have their meals in their own room and sit comfortable with staff while enjoying meals or bottles of milk. Staff know the children well and prepare their meals in accordance with individual abilities.

Children enjoy an extensive and stimulating range of equipment to promote a healthy life and their physical development. Children move with confidence and skill as they ride scooters and tricycles. They thoroughly enjoy manipulating hoops and can throw and catch a variety of equipment such as bean bags and balls. Children are eager to use the outside area and do so on wet or dry days. The addition of sun sails, which are erected in the summer months, ensures children are not exposed to harmful sunrays. Children have access to climbing and balancing equipment and enjoy building steps and balancing blocks from the large wooden bricks to climb

on and jump from. Staff have strung a line with balls and children have immense fun trying to hit these with rackets developing their hand and eye coordination. Staff have attended training with 'top Start' which also contributes to the range of physical experiences the children enjoy.

During indoor play children negotiate obstacles with ease and younger children have space to move around as they develop their mobility. Children's dexterity is well developed as they play with small world figures, manipulate jigsaws, use the computer keyboard and mouse and build towers of bricks. They use one-handed tools successfully as they glue, paint and cut with scissors. Younger children make rapid progress as they manipulate a range of toys, pushing and pulling, fitting shapes into cubes and enjoying painting with chunky brushes. Children are able to sleep or rest in line with their individual needs because staff obtain information about their routines at home. The sleep areas are warm, clean and comfortable for children to settle and get a restful sleep. Staff meet children's emotional needs because they recognise how comfort items help children feel secure and settled in their environment. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework well to provide a superior range of physical play experiences for younger children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is paramount to the organisation of the nursery. Staff are vigilant when recognising hazards and take positive steps to minimise these. Systematic risk assessments are carried out and all staff share in the reasonability for keeping the children safe. An externally organisation carries out safety checks and supports the nursery in the identification of any areas of risk. Each area of the nursery is extremely well planned, with space for children to move freely and safely around activities and play areas. The garden has recently been redeveloped and provides a wonderful place for children to gain fresh air, play in a safe environment and access varied and exciting activities and equipment. The area has been designed to incorporate different activities which encourage the children to use their bodies, keeping fit and healthy. Well implemented safety and security precautions are in place to promote and safeguard the children's welfare. For example, gates on the stairs and doorways separate children into age or ability groups, to ensure they can access toys and equipment safely. Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe in the nursery as they explain and practise simple procedures such as emergency evacuation and the boundaries necessary to help children participate in their own safety. For example, not running inside and helping to tidy away toys and equipment to keep themselves and others safe. Other safety measures are in place such as, socket covers, high handles, fire safety equipment, fire evacuation cot and fire alarms. All areas of the premises are checked regularly including the garden to enable children to explore and take risks within a safe environment. The nursery offers children a homely, bright and cheerful environment to feel comfortable, safe and secure. Wonderful wall displays of the children's art work contributes significantly to the bright and cheerful atmosphere that prevails throughout the nursery.

Children use a broad range of safe, good quality, purposeful and developmentally appropriate toys, furniture and equipment. Toys are extensively organised throughout the setting, many in child height storage units to encourage children to become independent and gain safe access to their resources. Children manage the stairs to the first floor holding on to the banisters. Sensitive reminders by staff encourage children to understand clear rules about how many children may play at an activity. This is reinforced with the children at group time as staff give splendid explanation to the children about the available activities for the session. The helpers of the day are able to choose additional resources from the activity book. Equipment and

activities are attractively presented to help children learn to respect and look after their resources. For example, imaginative play areas are well resourced, fun and interesting and designated areas for messy play ensures children keep items in one place. This helps children gain an awareness of safety and take some responsibility for looking after their equipment. High adult to child ratios ensure an exemplary level of supervision is maintained to support the children.

Children's safety and well-being is of the highest priority at the nursery. Staff are aware of, and act upon, the guidance from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The child protection policy is available to parents and reflects the group's approach to dealing with any concerns. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about child protection and all procedures are in place and implemented. The nursery good practice ensures any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner. There is a procedure in place to clearly show the steps taken in the event of any allegations made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children's enjoyment and achievement are promoted by the provision of an excellent integrated programme of care and education. Those under three benefit from activities and care routines informed by the 'Birth to three matters' framework, whilst children aged three and above follow the Foundation Stage. Staff are aware of the differing needs of children at varying ages and stages of development and take these factors into account when planning and delivering the activities and routines. Staff adjust their expectations accordingly but are alert for spontaneous learning opportunities, observing and recording the children's achievements to form a personal development profile. For example, a younger child discovers his reflection in a mirror, he babbles to himself, points to his image and laughs and kisses his reflection. He is making connections between himself and his image. Children enjoy a story time enabling them to listen and respond, learning how to make meaning from new and familiar vocabulary. They concentrate and sit attentively because staff make the story interesting and interactive. All children are encouraged to be independent and make choices based on their interests and developing their natural curiosity as learners, whether in the classrooms or outside in the garden area.

Children are helped to feel good about themselves because staff give them meaningful support, praise and encouragement to succeed. This builds their self-esteem and helps as they move from dependence to independence. Younger children initiate their own play as they move around the activities confidently. They are excited by the activities on offer and confidently take part. They are inquisitive as they explore the resources and respond to well planned stimulus. For example, exploring musical toys, interactive toys and making connections in their play as they link the cups, plates, plastic fruit and veg with the play kitchen. Younger children are enthusiastically encouraged to develop their communication through language, imitation and gestures. Older children are beginning to use language appropriately to communicate their thoughts, ideas and experiences. They use their growing language skills to socialise, become part of the group and begin to negotiate with others as a member of that group.

All aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework is skilfully delivered through varied and exciting activities. Children are becoming competent learners and skilful communicators which enable them to make rapid progress in this vibrant and fun setting. Clear and informative records detail the progress children make in line with this framework and provides valuable information for parents and staff to assess each child's progress and achievements. Staff support the children in a confident and motivated manner and it is evident that they enjoy the time spent with the

children helping them develop and become secure and confident learners. This high level of support helps children develop a strong sense of belonging, security and confidence to develop their own abilities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff help children to consolidate and extend their learning. They have developed vibrant, secure and worthwhile relationships with the children and encourage them to become involved and to persevere with tasks. They use excellent open-ended questions, encouraging children to think for themselves. Staff are skilled in working with the children. They know when to listen and to let child lead an activity. The layout of the room and presentation of activities ensures children can play at their own pace and initiate play that holds their interest. Staff enrich opportunities for children to be independent as they self-select activities for themselves. Children are absorbed, engaged and happy in the activities provided. Staff are skilled at extending the range of activities which supports the children's learning and enables them to make progress. Children have a strong sense of belonging as they greet each other and seek out friends to share play with. Behaviour is of a consistently high standard because children are engaged and occupied and because staff support them as they learn to manage and control their own behaviour. Older children recognise that they can make mistakes, but through high levels of encouragement, staff help them develop coping skills which aid them to move forward from these. Staff ensure children have purposeful opportunities to learn through play. They know the children's starting points to encourage them to develop the skills required in order to learn. Children have a helper rota which instils pride and self-esteem as they take some responsibility in the group. They have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs and those of others. For example, they make a harvest basket for people in need. The children decorate the boxes with leaf rubbings, they talk about people who are hungry and show concern for others while developing a sense of self as they understand that they have plenty of food to eat.

Children's language skills are fully extended by adults as they engage them in conversation, ask open-ended questions and encourage listening skills. For example, they sit together at group time, share stories and join in discussions as they link letters to objects. Children enjoy using their mark-making skills and confidently use a wide variety of tools. For example, children take part in the 'Jolly Phonic' scheme they use their finger to trace a letter, discover objects that start with the letter and use different methods to write the letter such as writing in sand or tracing on paper. These opportunities help children explore correct letter formation and the sounds of the letters. They have made shopping lists and mini story books. This helps them understand that writing is used for information and has meaning. Most children are secure recognising their own name and writing it on their work. Excellent labelling around the room helps to develop children's early word recognition. Children are gaining secure knowledge when counting and using numbers in play. For example, they count bricks as they build tall towers and recognise how many more to add or take away to make the tower reach parts of their body such as knees, tummy and chin. Numbers are reinforced in lots of play situations. For example, children fish numbered ducks out of the water tray, they recognise the numbers and seek out the next number in sequence. Children have a growing concept of matching, sorting, size, shape and simple problem solving skills as they take part in many activities.

Children gain a purposeful sense of time as they learn about themselves and the routine of the home room. For example, they understand what happens after they tidy-up and can go to play in the garden. They learn about the days of the week, seasonal changes and discover the natural world around them as they handle conkers and leaves, explore mini beasts and grow bulbs in

pots in the garden. Their skills are enhanced as they use the computer and other programmable toys with growing ease. They use many programs that supports their learning particularly in creative design, mathematics and literacy. They show an understanding of the equipment as they pretend to make phone calls and send e-mails. Children participate fully in the celebrations of different festivals and special occasions.

Children move with confidence around the room negotiating obstacles and manage equipment with ease. They are very competent as they put on their outdoor clothes doing-up fastenings, such as zips and buttons and putting on hats and gloves. Children's physical development is enhanced by the range of varied outdoor equipment available to develop their climbing and balancing skills. Children do jumping exercises to keep warm as they wait to come in from the garden area. They express how they feel after exercise and understand the effect this has on their bodies. A child decides it would be easier to put a box over her head rather than try to climb in it. She extends this by then laying the box down and crawling inside. This shows how children think problems through and attempt various ways to solve the problem. Wonderful play opportunities are available for children to extend their role play and use their own creativity to develop their imaginations. They enjoy being doctors and hairdressers. They use puppets and play in a well stocked home corner. Well planned activities give children a wealth of opportunity to be creative with their art work and wonderful examples are displayed around the room. Children have been making Christmas decorations such as 'Rudolf the red nose reindeer' and Father Christmas faces. Each child can be creative using their own skills and imaginations and their work is an individual representation of their ideas.

Staff have an extremely sound knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the Foundation Stage based upon how children learn. They plan and deliver a range of stimulating, challenging activities and learning opportunities based on the stepping stones of the early learning goals. This enables children to make excellent progress. These activities are assessed and evaluated to ensure that the learning intentions are achieved. The planning draws on a wide range of sources and staff's experiences for inspiration and ideas. The learning environment and programme of activities is planned to provide an innovative and balanced range of activities and experiences across the six areas of learning rooted in expert knowledge. This gives a clear picture of the aims and objectives of each activity. They show how activities can be extended into other areas of learning, the resources for the activity and the key vocabulary to be introduced during the activity. They show how the activity can be adapted for individual children and staff are clearly able to explain their strategies to support each child. Staff are enthusiastic, patient and caring and this impacts immensely on the children's enjoyment and learning. A clear evaluation of the activities help staff recognise when it has worked well or if it needs adjustment for future development. Staff are enthusiastic about the delivery of the educational programme which impacts on the children's enjoyment and learning.

Staff organise each child's assessment record so that they are meaningful and relevant to the individual child. These are well presented and contain photographs, samples of work and comments and observations from staff, all dated for reference. Alongside this is the stepping stones record, showing the stage of development and indicating the next stages of learning. Staff have started to use the Foundation Stage activity observations which provide outstanding information about how children have achieved certain stages in their development. Each child's development record starts either with information from home or carries through with information from the 'Birth to three matters' observation. All development records are used as an ongoing working document, frequently updated and available to share with parents and carers at any time, with space for comments and feedback from parents. From there, key workers can plan the next stages of learning for individual children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children have opportunity to make sense of the world around them. They investigate and explore through first hand experiences in an interesting environment. They use an abundance of resources and take part in worthwhile activities to help them develop an understanding of the wider world and increase their awareness of diversity. Children take part in a range of activities of both familiar and unfamiliar festivals and celebrations. For example, Christmas, Easter, Chinese New Year, Eid and Diwali. Staff use their imaginations and those of the children to promote their experiences. For example, making candles holders for the festival of light. Staff have positive attitudes and present themselves as sensitive role models. This helps children relate to others and gain a secure understanding of the needs of others. Children clearly thrive in this environment where they are engaged and nurtured by staff who value each and every child supporting them as they develop and achieve. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children learn how to respect themselves and others because of the high level of respect they are shown by staff.

At present there are no children attending with a learning difficulty and/or disability. The nursery has a confident Special Educational Needs Coordinator who is skilled in the support of all children. Appropriate systems are in place to help any child receive sensitive support to help them make progress. Some children are attending who speak English as an additional language and they receive a high level of support to help them settle and learn to communicate with their peers and staff. Staff are clearly committed to supporting each and every child in order to meet their needs and promote a truly inclusive environment where every child matters. Detailed pre-registration forms gain full information from parents about each child in order to fully meet their needs.

Children have an excellent understanding of the boundaries within the nursery and respond to direction from adults in a positive fashion. They eagerly respond to the consistent approach followed by all adults. This impacts clearly on their security and confidence as they know what is expected of them. Children develop secure levels of self-esteem and are beginning to resolve differences and gain an understanding between right and wrong. This also has the effect of building their managing skills and self-reliance. Highly effective behaviour management defuses situations and distracts and engages children in worthwhile activities. For example, children are busy, occupied and interested in the activities. Staff have high expectations for all children and are excellent role models. Children share in the responsibility for their own behaviour as they learn to listen to others, share and wait turns and are being kind to their friends. For example, children playing on the computer give up their seat to a child who has been waiting for a turn. They help each other out as they do up aprons and share their play together. Highly effective rules have been devised and displayed and are written in the positive voice for children to refer and relate to. Staff are caring role models for the children, creating a calm, positive, fun and interesting environment in which they thrive. A purposeful reward system is used alongside an abundance of verbal praise. Children receive stickers, stars and certificates to acknowledge achievements or kind behaviour. This helps them develop their confidence, self-reliance and eagerness to participate and succeed.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. This has been developed and contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. Parents play an active role in their child's care and a two-way sharing of information is encouraged with the use of daily communication sheets and verbal discussions with key staff. Parents are invited to regular open days and events and have consultation times twice a year for more formal exchange of

information about their child's progress and achievements. Additional evenings are planned to provide parents with information about mark making and communication, language and literacy skills to share with their child. Their involvement impacts greatly on the children's good health, safety, care and learning. Staff are extremely approachable and friendly, helping parents feel secure and at ease, confident with the care provided for their child. Parents have ample information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and how the nursery implements this. Information about the Foundation Stage and curriculum is available to them so they gain an understanding how their child will make progress and how this can be supported at home. Plans are displayed in each room so that parents gain a further insight into the type of activities their child takes part in and enables them to talk about these with their child and extend them at home if they wish. Parents are encouraged to choose a book to take home and share with their child which again impacts on the partnership in place to assist their children's development. Parents have information available if they wish to raise any concerns and these are recorded to share with parents by request. In addition to this, parents fill in questionnaires to share their views on the nursery and to provide valuable feedback for staff. The partnership with parents and carers is further enhanced with the proactive parents' association.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The superb quality of organisation throughout the nursery contributes significantly to children's care, learning and welfare. The nursery manager continually enhances her knowledge with extensive training and ensures staff can access both external and in-house training courses to meet their individual needs, experiences and wishes. The management team are responsible for all aspects of the nursery including staff supervision and employment, ratios and deployment and the operational plan. There is a robust and rigorous system in place to ensure the children are cared for by staff with appropriate qualifications and experience and an effective induction and assessment system is an integral part of this process. The overall team spirit and morale is excellent throughout the nursery with the high levels of support provided by the management team. This high level of organisation clearly supports the children as they move through the nursery from the baby room to the pre-school room.

Staff demonstrate an enhanced knowledge of the National Standards and are committed to applying these throughout all aspects of the care they provide for the children. This knowledge is extended in their understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum, enabling them to help children make rapid progress in their development and learning. Staff are dedicated practitioners and have a high regard for the well-being of the children. They are exceedingly well deployed across the nursery with contingency plans in place to enable staff to have breaks and to support any staff's absences. The deployment ensures children are cared for by consistent adults and relationships are developed alongside enriched play opportunities to support children's natural curiosity to learn through their play.

The manager, deputy and room leaders work closely together and have built a stable, positive and motivated staff team. An inclusive environment has been created which clearly shows that each child matters. The management and staff share in their vision for the future development of the nursery. Staff are asked to fill in questionnaires to give comments and feedback to management in all aspects of the nursery's organisation. They are actively involved in producing extensive action and development plans for areas they would like to change or develop using their own ideas and experience. For example, the outdoor area, music trolley, cooking resources

and ways to implement the communication and literacy program. This shows an exemplary commitment by staff to raise the quality of care and learning for the children.

Highly effective organisation of all records and documents ensures children's welfare and enables parents to play an active role in their child's care. All staff are committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement of their practice. They regularly monitor and improve the quality of their care through comprehensive evaluations and meetings. The managers work closely together to revise policies and procedures for the nursery and to ensure these are implemented by staff. An extensive self-evaluation folder has been developed covering all aspects of their practice across the National Standards. This enables the management team and staff to continually evaluate their practice, implementing changes together. High levels of support and pastoral care for staff are in place. This is reflected in the commitment, dedication and clear sense of purpose staff show towards their roles in the nursery and the care they provide for the children. A happy environment has been created which clearly shows that children are secure, settled and content. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to develop staff's awareness of the Foundation Stage to improve the quality of activities across all areas of learning and to review the recording and assessment systems to ensure continuity across the nursery.

Staff have access to high quality training on the Foundation Stage with both externally and in-house training. Continuous monitoring takes place from senior staff to ensure the Foundation Stage is delivered appropriately and extended with the children. Through observations and discussions with staff they have a high regard to how children can learn and use their training to extend experiences for children throughout their learning. The assessment system has been extended with reviewed planning pro-formas, to incorporate the 'Birth to three matters' framework following onto the Foundation Stage. Assessment opportunities within the documents have been changed to make the wording consistent with the stepping stones and shows each child's progress in a clearer format. This is then used to inform planning more effectively. Staff use children's records to record progress during or after the focus activity and clear observational notes are made and accompanied by photographs and examples of the children's work.

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

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 outstanding.

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

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