

The Learning Tree Kindergarten & Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	256834
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Inspector	Anna Davies
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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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Learning Tree Kindergarten and Nursery School opened in 1990. It operates from a semi-detached Victorian house close to the centre of Peterborough. The building has three levels. The babies and library room are based in the basement area, children aged two to three are accommodated on the ground floor and the pre-school unit is based on the first floor. A maximum of 42 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 08:00 to 17:30 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 86 children from six months to five years on roll. Of these, 32 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area, as most of their parents travel in to work around the city of Peterborough. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

A total of 17 staff work with the children on a full and part-time basis. This includes the Principal who holds Qualified Teaching Status (QTS). Of the staff, 10 hold appropriate National Vocational

Qualifications (NVQ) to Level 2 or 3. A further two staff are working towards an appropriate early years qualification. The setting also employs a chef and has further support once a week from qualified teachers of music, drama and dance. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is promoted through effective routines and practices. For example, children's hands are cleaned with individual cloths before they eat and they are encouraged to see to their own personal hygiene by accessing their own tissues when they wish to wipe their nose. Staff ensure that nappy changing procedures prevent the risk of cross-contamination by wearing gloves and cleaning the changing mat between each use. All babies' milk feeds are prepared in the kitchen which is very clean and hygienically maintained. Most staff hold valid first aid certificates and each room has its own first aid box which is regularly checked to ensure that the contents remain suitable. This ensures that staff are able to respond appropriately in the event of an accident. All documentation regarding the administration of medication and recording of accidents is well-maintained.

All children benefit from regular fresh air and physical activities. The garden is spacious allowing children opportunities to run, hide, play ball games, ride tricycles and take part in parachute games. Appropriately sized play equipment ensures that all children have opportunities to develop their physical skills. Toddlers and pre-school children take part in weekly dance and movement sessions run by a qualified teacher. During such sessions children learn to move imaginatively in different ways such as climbing, jumping and stretching like their favourite superheroes. Older children develop their small physical skills as they skilfully use scissors to cut around complex shapes and use tools in play dough to make patterns. Babies confidently pull themselves up on members of staff sitting nearby, crawl through the play tunnel and learn balance and control as they steady themselves on the rocking toys.

Children are well-nourished. Children benefit from the award-winning cooks provision of a good range of nutritious meals and snacks promoting their growth and development. All food is home-made and incorporates many fresh fruit and vegetables. Children eat in the dining room with their peer groups. This ensures that these times are social and enjoyable occasions. Staff work with parents to ensure that children's dietary needs are met and details of allergies are clearly displayed for all staff which ensures children's good health and well-being. Fresh drinking water is available throughout the day from water dispensers. This ensures that children remain well-hydrated. Children are learning about healthy eating through projects and discussion. For example, local chefs visit to encourage children to create their own healthy pizzas.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a homely and welcoming environment, in groups according to their ages and stages of development. They have access to good facilities across three floors within the premises. Children have ample space to play freely and provision is made for them to rest and sleep in comfort. Children use a good range of toys, resources and equipment which are regularly checked to ensure that they remain safe and suitable for use. However, the pushchairs used by babies are currently stored outside, and although situated under a sheltered area

against the building, show signs of damp as they still remain exposed to the elements. These storage arrangements do not ensure that the pushchairs remain in a suitable condition for use.

Children's safety is generally promoted throughout the setting. For example, the premises are kept secure, a stair gate at the top of the stairs prevents pre-school children from accessing the stairs without supervision and a secure fire guard in the toddler room enables younger children to move around the room in safety. Babies are secured into highchairs when eating meals and all sockets are covered to prevent accidents. All children are closely supervised both when inside and in the outdoor environment. Risk assessments have been completed for the different garden areas which identifies potential hazards and the actions taken to ensure that children are safe. However, a drop from one level to another in the first area of the garden poses a potential risk to children's safety if they use this particular area. Careful consideration has been given to fire evacuation procedures. These are practised with children regularly and repeated if there are new staff or children in attendance. A complex fire alarm system is installed to further enhance children's safety. Children are learning about keeping themselves safe as they play. For example, they are reminded to sit on chairs appropriately and asked to pick items up off the floor in order to prevent accidents.

Children's welfare is safeguarded well because all staff have a secure understanding of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child in their care. All relevant documentation and information guidelines are in place to further support staff in protecting children from harm and neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and settled in the nursery because they enjoy warm and caring relationships with the staff. A good range of equipment and resources are used effectively to provide interesting play activities for all the children and some of these are organised so that children can make their own choices as they play. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework, children's interests and next steps of learning to plan activities for all of the younger children. This ensures that the activities are meaningful and enable children to make good progress in their learning and development. Babies enjoy sensory activities such as experimenting with paint using their hands, rollers and brushes as well as investigating objects such as boxes and plastic bottles filled with different materials, in the heuristic play box. Staff spend time with the children following their lead. For example, when a baby begins to wiggle their body, staff put music on and supports them as they 'dance'. Babies share warm relationships with staff, giving and receiving lots of cuddles which ensures that they feel valued, settled and secure. Their language development is promoted through songs, stories and constant interaction from staff. Staff encourage them to develop confidence with new activities that they are initially unsure of for example, playing with a toy snake. Babies have opportunities to go out into the garden or on local walks, for example to the nearby boating lake to feed the ducks. These activities further enhance their enjoyment whilst at the setting. Toddlers are supported well to further develop their skills for example, matching photographs of animals with where they live, colour recognition games and following instructions during the weekly dancing and movement sessions. Staff have a good awareness of how to engage children in their learning for example by using props such as puppets to maintain their interest and by following their interests. As toddlers explore the heuristic materials, staff ask them questions to promote their learning and understanding. Toddlers are beginning to form close relationships with each other, for example, sharing books together, one turning the page whilst the other points out the tiger in the picture and 'roars' accordingly! They are developing their concentration and attention

skills as some persevere for long periods completing a favourite jigsaw puzzle or playing games with staff. Many art activities are planned for the toddlers and staff give children time to freely experiment and demonstrate their creativity for example as they feel the paint between their fingers and print with blocks.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They use this knowledge to provide a good range of practical activities to enable children to achieve the stepping stones towards the early learning goals in all the areas of learning. Staff are clear about individual children's next steps because they carry out ongoing observations to collect evidence of their skills and knowledge, which they then use to inform detailed planning. Staff use a variety of teaching methods such as explanation and demonstrations using props, providing resources for children to initiate their own learning and then supporting and reinforcing their exploration and discovery through effective questioning and conversation. During favourite stories such as 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' staff are particularly skilled at involving children in the story, allowing them opportunities to ask questions and relate parts of the story to other experiences in their lives. For example, they discuss how the 'squelchy mud' is similar to the feel of sand between their feet at the seaside. Children of all abilities are supported appropriately to ensure they make the most of the learning opportunities on offer. For example, older or more able children are encouraged to write their surnames and younger or less able children are supported in recognising their first names. The play rooms used by pre-school children are well-organised into different areas of learning and are well-resourced. However, there are some occasions when the deployment of staff affects their ability to share their time in the most effective way amongst the children. For example, after lunch one member of staff is with a group of eight children in one room, all wanting to do or involve the member of staff in different things according to their particular interests. Parents may also be collecting children from this group at the same time and require feedback about their child's morning. As a result, the member of staff's time is thinly spread between the children. Staff make good use of external support such as weekly visits from a dance and drama teacher and also a singing teacher. These sessions are very well planned covering all areas of the curriculum and further enhances all areas of children's learning.

Children are making good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They are confident to offer their own ideas in small groups and to try new activities such as learning how to place a telephone order in the Chinese Takeaway role play area. They work well together, introducing visitors to their 'best friends' and helping each other to complete more complex tasks such as moving beads around a wooden maze. They are able to spontaneously take turns, giving instructions to each other about when it is their turn during a game. They are beginning to understand that others may have different likes and dislikes to themselves for example favourite colours.

They are developing their competencies well across the four aspects of communication, speaking and listening, reading and writing. They recall and share jokes with staff and are extending their vocabulary through the introduction of new words. For example, staff swap words with similar meanings in familiar stories such as 'petrified' instead of 'scared'. The 'Jolly Phonics' system is used to introduce children to sounds and letters. Children recognise the sound that the initial letters in their own name make and many posters and displays of letters encourage and stimulate this area of learning. Children enjoy familiar stories and take a real interest in reading. They make home made reading books containing familiar words such as names of family members. They recognise their first and last names and some can write these confidently

and are learning that writing can be used for different purposes such as taking orders in the role play area or writing Chinese numerals.

Children count confidently. For example, when counting a caterpillars legs in a story, they count up to 16. They are developing some early calculation skills through practical activities and spontaneously use size and shape language as they cut around shapes and use play dough. Children explore and investigate as they play in water, carefully filling bottles using funnels and are aware of their local environment through topics such as 'road safety' where they are able to talk about how to cross the road safely and how they get to nursery. They design their own sculptures out of play dough, making detailed birthday cakes with 'smarties' on the top. Children enjoy using the computer for games that involve manoeuvring the mouse and using the letters on the keyboard. They are beginning to develop an awareness of different cultures and traditions as they take part in cultural dances such as the rhythmic dance of Punjab and dragon dances to celebrate Chinese New Year.

Children are able to be creative, expressing many of their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, dance and imaginative play. For example, drama and movement sessions encourage the children to use their imagination to consider different ways of moving as their favourite superheroes and to interpret different topics such as fireworks, the seasons and emotions, when creating a dance.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All staff know the children well and they are treated as individuals. For example, every child enjoys a homemade birthday cake made by the cook and all children have their own space for their personal belongings. These practices ensure that children feel a strong sense of belonging. Warm, working relationships are quickly developed with parents to ensure that necessary information is received about the children so that they can be cared for appropriately and plans can be made to meet their ongoing needs. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well supported within the setting. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that they make good progress in their learning and development and that their continuing needs are monitored and met. Children gain a secure understanding of their local community and individual and national culture because they get out and about on visits regularly, celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year and take part in fund raising events such as 'Shades day'. They are sensitively introduced to differing cultures and learn to respect all people through having daily access to a range of resources during their everyday play, that reflect diversity.

Children behave very well because staff act as good role models. They are consistent in prompting children and praising them. They promote their self-esteem effectively by giving them frequent praise and children are encouraged to think about others as part of their daily routine such as everyone helping together to tidy away so that it is fair. Staff speak respectfully towards the children and deal with instances of inappropriate behaviour in a positive way using sensitive explanations. Staff use actions such as putting their hands on their head, to signal that they require the children's attention. This ensures that children understand what is expected in a meaningful and fun way. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents receive lots of regular information updates throughout the nursery by regular letters and information slips for the individual age groups of children. A notice board contains a wealth

of information about forthcoming activities, events and topics so that they are well-informed of the opportunities that their children have. Parents of babies receive written feedback on diary sheets about their child's day and staff are in the process of developing this further to include more detail. Parents may request a consultation with staff if they wish for a formal review of their children's progress and staff make time at drop-off and collection times, to speak with all parents so that they are kept well-informed of children's changing routines and needs. Parents are invited to give feedback on the provision through questionnaires. These demonstrate that parents are very happy with the quality of care offered. The setting prioritises forming effective working relationships with parents. To this end, it offers flexibility in the care offered and makes every effort to encourage parents to become involved in activities such as making Christmas cards at home with their children to display at the nursery and offering open evenings to discover the benefits of activities such as heuristic play.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. Parents receive a good amount of information about the Foundation Stage through leaflets and drop-in sessions so that they understand about the funding process. They are kept well-informed about the activities that their children take part in and are encouraged to extend some of this learning at home. For example, a 'sound scrapbook' enables parents to work with children to find objects at home beginning with a given letter or sound. Parents are able to look at children's 'Record of achievement' files whenever they wish and consultations are offered on a flexible basis throughout the year with one particularly organised for the summer term before children leave for school. Parents are invited to contribute comments into their children's assessment files. However, there is not currently a secure system for sharing children's individual next steps of learning on a regular basis with all parents so that they are fully aware of what staff are working on next with their children and can support and extend these particular areas of learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The overall organisation of the nursery contributes effectively to children's well-being. Robust procedures are in place to ensure all staff are recruited and vetted appropriately and induction and supervision meetings ensure the ongoing monitoring and support of staff. High priority is given to the professional development of staff. They attend regular training and some are currently working towards Foundation degrees and Early Years Professional Status. This ensures that children benefit from staff's high levels of knowledge and understanding of current child care practices. The premises are used generally effectively to provide for the differing needs of the children, and the Principal spends regular time in all the rooms which helps her to monitor on an ongoing basis the quality of care received by the children and the needs and practice of the staff. Staff work well together and are proud of their individual roles and responsibilities. Ratios are always maintained, staffing levels are increased on outings and children generally benefit from being cared for in small groups by key staff. However, when staff are on their own with small groups, they are not always able to meet or effectively support all of the children's needs. Effective use is made of all available rooms within the nursery and time spent in these rooms is well organised. For example, groups of children take it in turns to eat in the dining room or to use the toddler room for dance and movement sessions. Resources in the pre-school room are well-organised and stored at children's level so that they are able to make choices about the direction they wish to take their play in. However, this system is less developed in the younger children's rooms.

All records are well-maintained and stored appropriately to promote confidentiality. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to reflect current legislation and practice in the nursery. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The nursery principal and manager work well together to monitor the provision for nursery education to ensure that children are making good progress in their learning. They have a hands-on approach and are positive about advice given to them as they are committed to further developing the provision for the benefit of children and parents. For example, plans are currently underway to further develop the garden to provide children with richer experiences. They seek and take on board, advice from local schools about their assessment records and ensure that good relationships with local schools help children when the time comes to leave the nursery for school. For example, they make visits, enable reception teachers to visit the nursery and ensure that children with additional needs are well supported during the transitional period. The principal has high expectations of staff and as a result, the staff team are committed and enthusiastic about their roles within the nursery.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to develop risk assessment procedures and review practices in the baby room to improve health and safety. This specifically related to children sleeping in pushchairs. Staff work with parents to ensure that sleeping arrangements meet the needs of the children and follow parents wishes, closely supervising children if, for example, they have fallen asleep in the pushchair following a local walk with staff. Full risk assessments are in place and these are generally effective in identifying hazards. This promotes children's safety in the setting. The provider was asked to link planning and assessment for children under three with 'Birth to three matters' guidance. This has been fully achieved and ensures that staff can monitor younger children's progress in their learning and development.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to provide the parents with more detailed information regarding the range of activities offered to their children. Parents now receive a good amount of information through flyers, the planning documents that are displayed clearly and curriculum evenings where parents are invited into the setting to learn about the provision of activities for their children.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT 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):

- develop further ways of organising resources in the younger children's rooms so that they are able to self-select from a wider range
- minimise potential risks to children, this specifically relates to the drop from one level to another in the first area of the garden
- ensure that the pushchairs used by young children are appropriately stored so that they remain in a suitable condition
- ensure that the organisation and deployment of staff is always effective in meeting children's needs (this also applies to nursery education).

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):

- develop further ways of sharing children's individual next steps of learning with all parents so that they are fully aware of what staff are working on next with their children and can support and extend these particular areas of learning at home.

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