

Little Fish Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY293955
Inspection date	05 February 2008
Inspector	Caroline Wright
Setting Address	Methodist Church Hall, Battersbee Road, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE3 9LD
Telephone number	0776 5418825
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Registered person	Little Fish Preschool
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Little Fish Preschool was registered in 2004. It is a privately run provision situated within a church hall in the New Parks area of Leicester. The preschool is open during school term time between the hours of 09:15 and 11:45. The hours are extended until 13:00 for children attending the lunch club. Children are accommodated in one large hall, although have access to a smaller group room and toilet/wash areas. There is an enclosed outdoor play area for children's physical play and activities.

There are currently 25 children from two to under five-years on roll. Of these, 16 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as children with English is an additional language.

The pre-school employs five members of staff: four of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating and they know that washing your hands 'stops germs getting into your tummy.' Staff act as good role models, wiping down surfaces before serving snack and after children have eaten to help them to stay healthy. Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. For example, they are able to run around and exert themselves, in the playground, so that they learn the importance of regular fresh air and exercise. Staff provide children with very good opportunities to develop new physical skills, such as rolling, balancing and hopping or jumping when they engage in physical exercises each morning. In addition, staff use these sessions to help children to exercise the muscles in their face and neck in order to improve their speech and language development. Children are aware of changes that occur in their bodies due to physical exertion and comment 'I'm hot' when they have been running around or taking part in exercise and movement activities.

Children learn about healthy eating during discussion with key workers at snack time. Staff follow their healthy eating policy well and provide fresh fruit or other healthy options for their children to eat at snack time. Staff talk to children about dental hygiene to help children to learn about the importance of caring for their teeth and they report that 'apples make your teeth strong.' Staff organise visits to the Life Education Caravan to help children to learn about the benefits of healthy eating and of a good night's sleep to their ongoing good health. If the children become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of the preschool, up to date records are in place to make sure that good care is given.

A suitable range of large and small equipment inside and out enables children to develop new physical skills according to their stage of development. They handle small pieces of construction toys competently and use scissors, glue sticks and other tools, developing co-ordination and manipulative dexterity. The needs of children under three-years are well met by adults who have a sound understanding of their developmental needs. They are able to take a rest in the comfortable book area when they want to. Very good support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they have access to appropriate activities to enable them to develop new physical skills according to their individual needs so that they make good progress.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move around safely under the constant supervision of the pre-school staff. Children learn how to keep themselves safe when using scissors or sitting on chairs, helped by the gentle reminders from their key workers. Good procedures for arrival and departures prevent children from leaving the premises without adult supervision. A good system is in place to record how many children are present and staff amend the numerical display as children leave or arrive throughout the session. This helps to keep children safe in the event of an emergency evacuation of the premises.

Children show their knowledge and understanding of personal safety when they engage in role-play: they talk about the 'fire' in their imaginative play and remark that they will have to 'dial 999 to call for the fire engine.' Adults further support children's learning about taking

responsibility for their own safety through topics, such as 'Road Safety', which create opportunities for discussion about the Green Cross Code, wearing seat-belts in the car or using pelican crossings to cross the road. In addition, key workers talk to children about 'Stranger Danger' and invite local Police and Fire Officers into the setting to help children to learn through practical experiences.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who have a good understanding of child protection procedures, which are in line with those set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff are pro-active in recording concerns for children's welfare and work effectively with other professionals to promote children's best interests and keep them safe from harm.

The daily risk assessment of the premises, which adults carry out before each session begins, addresses any potential hazard to children's safety. A very good risk assessment procedure is in place to ensure that children are safe when they are taken on outings. Adults visit the venue in advance and complete a thorough risk assessment; they identify actions that they need to take to reduce any potential hazards before the trip takes place. A wide range of written policies and appropriate procedures are in place, including regular fire drills, to help children know what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation of the premises. Children use resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development, and these are checked regularly by the playgroup staff to ensure they are in good condition and are safe. This promotes children's ongoing safety and well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy at the pre-school and enjoy their play. They use a satisfactory range of construction materials, such as 'duplo' and 'mobilo' to make cars and houses with the help of their key workers. They use tools such as paint brushes to paint pictures and pastry cutters or rolling pins in the dough. Children enjoy drawing with pencils and felt-tips, making meaningful marks and developing new physical skills. Staff plan interesting activities to help children to learn about new textures and materials through their play. For example, staff provide wet or dry sand with Bob the Builder diggers and scoops, ice cubes or corn-flour and water 'gloop' for children to explore. However, younger children are not able to access all of the resources that are provided on a daily basis for much of the session. They are restricted to one area of the play room until adults open up the play space to all children. This affects their ability to pursue their own interests and to make decisions and limits progress.

Adults working with the under-threes are beginning to make changes to the way they plan activities so that they will be skilled in implementing the Early Years Foundation Stage later this year to meet the needs of the younger children. Key workers carry out regular observations of children and use these to assess children's progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children play together in groups and engage in conversations, listening to each other's ideas. For example, when playing with the dough they talk together about the 'little sweets' and 'cherry cake' that they have made. They use number names and mathematical language such as 'more' and 'enough'; they talk about the 'massive' snake and the 'big' lorry as they play with 'small world' or 'measuring snakes'. They learn about shape, space and measure when they match socks on the washing

line in the outdoor area. They enjoy making dens using large pieces of fabric and tables and line up chairs to make a bus. Children enjoy using the everyday technology such as binoculars and talk about the process, saying, 'this is far away now, turn it round and it gets big, look!' as they play. They take part in activities that help them to learn about patterns and changes in the natural environment. For example, during the 'Mini Beast' topic they observe tadpoles as they change into frogs.

They tell their own stories and use the available dressing up materials to extend their narratives. Children eagerly join in with singing familiar songs and clap their hands to follow a rhythm. They demonstrate that they recognise familiar words such as their own name when they hang their coats up in the morning or find their name card at snack time registration. Staff provide children with good experiences, such as 'Beat Baby' and 'Sound Lotto' to help them to begin to develop their knowledge of sounds and letters. Children make marks on paper and paint with water on the walls in the outside play area to help them to learn early writing skills.

However, children do not have enough opportunities to learn about calculation, sounds and letters, writing or reading through daily routines and play situations. For example, staff set the table for snack, serve the children with their food and they count the number of children present each morning. Adults write children's name on their art work without asking children to attempt this for themselves. As a result, older or more able children are unchallenged and opportunities to extend children's learning through practical experiences are missed. Although staff take children to visit the library regularly and encourage children to share books with their parents at home, they do not provide enough opportunities for children to join in with planned story sessions to help them to extend their listening skills or to develop a love of books and stories in the future. Consequently children show little interest in the book corner during the session and some children are uninterested in the books staff give them to read alone at the end of the session.

Children's ability to explore a wide range of media and materials and to develop their creativity is limited. Although adults plan art and craft activities into the programme regularly and a 'make and do' area is set up each day, they do not always make sure that essential resources such as glue or scissors are available for children to use. Children's access to activities such as the home corner, sand and 'gloop' are limited by the organisation of the play space during the first part of the session. This limits progress.

Planning for activities is clearly linked to the stepping stones and the early learning goals; staff carry out daily observations of children and use these effectively to monitor children's progress. They are beginning to use assessment records to identify children's skills and interests so that they can plan the next steps for individual children. Staff working with funded children are suitably qualified and are secure in their understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They understand how activities contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals. Nonetheless, many activities offer insufficient challenge or interest to children and this affects their learning. Staff do not make effective use of the resources available or use everyday routines to extend children's learning beyond the planned learning intentions. This impacts upon children's progress.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children show a strong sense of belonging as they greet key-workers and each other upon arrival at the pre-school. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

They work together co-operatively during group activities, take turns when they play together with the marble run or when they crawl through the tunnel at registration. Adults carefully explain what they expect children to do in a way that the children can understand, to help children to behave well. Staff encourage children to respect each other's needs and to use conventions such as 'please' and 'thank-you', acting as positive role models themselves. Children access a suitable range of resources that reflect diversity, to help them to learn about other members of society through their play. They talk with each other about their families and engage in activities that help them to learn about other life-styles; circle time discussions enable them to talk about what they do at home so that they learn about each other's family cultures and traditions.

A very good system is in place to support children with disabilities and learning difficulties. One-to-one support workers engage in regular discussions with other specialists and with parents to ensure that a programme to meet children's individual needs is developed. Children's achievements are recorded and appropriate next steps are identified to secure ongoing progress according to each child's stage of development. A suitable system is in place to support children who speak English as an additional language. Key workers gather key words from parents when children arrive at the setting so that they can help children to build on their existing language and become confident communicators.

However, the organisation of the preschool session day does not encourage children's decision making or promote positive behaviour. Although children have access to a good range of equipment and activities over time, for much of each morning session, children are allocated to one or another area of the play room depending upon their age or stage of development. This impacts upon behaviour and learning.

Good information from parents is gathered by key workers when children first start at the setting to help them to settle easily and to become confident members of the pre-school. When children are transferred from another setting, very good information is recorded to help them to make the transition easily so that their individual needs are well met and children can develop a good sense of belonging. Activities such as 'the family tree' help staff to get to know children's families and friends so that they can help children to develop good levels of self-esteem. The preschool supports and takes part in a wide range of community activities to help children and families to become part of the wider community. A record of parents' concerns or complaints is in place.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Positive relationships support children's care and contribute to the progress of children who receive funded early education. Parents receive good information about nursery activities and can take home 'play packs' to share with their children. Extensive information is available on the notice-boards in the entrance area, including good information about the outcomes for children, so that they can support their child's learning at home. A successful key-worker system enables parents to share information informally on a daily basis and comment on what their children do at home. Regular discussions on a daily basis enable parents to be well informed about their children's progress. In addition, parents' ongoing comments are requested and used to continue to develop practice in the pre-school so that individual families' needs can be met effectively.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the preschool promotes positive outcomes for children. Despite the fact that the preschool uses community premises, staff work hard to provide an environment which is attractive and provides plenty of space and a wide range of resources for children to play with. The induction programme for new staff ensures that everyone is aware of procedures for child protection and knows about safeguarding children.

All of the legally required documents, including a procedure to record complaints or concerns, which contribute to children's health, safety and well-being, are in place and regularly reviewed. However, the documentation for recording child protection concerns does not properly reflect key workers' current practice in supporting children where they raise concerns about children's welfare or safety; where parents raise concerns about the provision those concerned do not sign to acknowledge that they have been informed of the outcome when the concerns are investigated or when changes to practice are made; parents do not countersign incident records where appropriate to acknowledge that they have been appropriately informed.

Staff engage in suitable training to enable them to provide a balanced curriculum that meets the developmental needs of the children in their group and to help them to learn about effective behaviour management techniques. However, the organisation of the pre-school session does not encourage children's decision making or promote positive behaviour. Although children have access to a good range of equipment and activities over time, for much of each morning session, children are allocated to one or another area of the play room depending upon their age or stage of development. As a result, some of the children are not interested in some of the activities and begin to wander around looking for something to do. In addition, adults instruct children to get ready for snack or for outdoor play, even if they are grossly involved in activities, simply to fit in with the organisation of the session. This means that children are unable to engage in sustained thinking or to set their own challenges. Children are then kept waiting for extended periods of time without purposeful activity for adult led activities such as snack time, to begin. They become bored and their behaviour deteriorates.

Leadership and management of nursery education are satisfactory. The manager and staff have regular opportunities to meet as a team and share information and to exchange practice ideas. A good programme for training and development activities is in place and staff are effective in implementing new ideas into their daily practice. For example, they have recently attended training to develop outdoor play provision so that all areas of learning are covered and children are able to learn across the curriculum in their preferred learning environment. They have drawn up an action plan detailing how they will improve the outdoor play and have already made some positive changes to the programme. In addition, the pre-school team access support from the advisory teacher in the local authority to identify areas for further development. However, there is no system to monitor and evaluate the provision for funded education. As a result, there are weaknesses in the areas of learning; essential resources, such as glue and scissors at the 'make and do' table, are not always available and some activities lack challenge and interest for older or more able children. This affects learning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure that all relief staff have made application to Ofsted to undergo vetting procedures and to make sure that premises are secure with regard to entrance area and that children are unable to leave them unsupervised. Although requirements have changed and it is no longer Ofsted's responsibility to check that staff are suitable, the provider has made good arrangements to ensure that staff are thoroughly vetted before they are left with children. All of the essential checks are completed and references are taken up on all new staff, including those who are on the relief rota as well as students and volunteers. Procedures have been implemented to make sure the entrance area is kept locked during the session and staff are especially vigilant when parents are arriving to drop off or collect their children to make sure that children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. All areas of the premises are secure. These actions have improved children's safety overall.

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 satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve documents and records and ensure that parents countersign to say they have been informed where necessary; this refers to the records for safeguarding children when concerns are raised about their welfare, behaviour incidents and the record of parents' concerns or complaints
- improve the organisation of the session to ensure that children can make decisions, engage in periods of uninterrupted sustained thinking and are not kept waiting for extended periods of time without purposeful activity.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve the programmes for communication language and literacy and mathematics: provide children with increased opportunities to write for a purpose, read, learn about

sounds and letters, and to use calculations and numbers through daily routines and in play situations

- improve the programmes for creativity and knowledge and understanding of the world: provide children with easy access to a wide range of media and materials and the ability to explore their imagination through improved access to role play experiences
- set up a system to monitor and evaluate the programme for funded education: ensure that activities provide appropriate challenge for all children and essential resources are always available at activities.

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