

The Firs Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127688
Inspection date	12 February 2008
Inspector	Mary Van De Peer
Setting Address	Chartham Primary School, Shalmsford Street, Chartham, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 7QN
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Registered person	The Firs Nursery
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 Firs Nursery opened in 1994 and operates from several rooms including the two main play rooms in premises located in the grounds of Chartham Primary School, Shalmsford Street, near Canterbury, Kent. A maximum of 32 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:00 to 15:15, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 62 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 54 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs eight staff. There are five staff, including the supervisors, who hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one member of staff who is working towards a qualification. The nursery is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance. They also receive support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The environment, resources and equipment children use are clean and checked regularly. An example of this, is a whiteboard located in the toilet areas to record when they were last inspected. A sick child policy is in place to help ensure children who are unwell do not attend the nursery. Laminated posters showing easy-to-follow steps for hand-washing are displayed and children use disposable towels, helping reduce the spread of infections. The nursery has obtained parents permission to enable them to seek emergency medical advice or treatment. Accident and medication procedures are clear and understood by staff and details are recorded. Parents sign to acknowledge that they have been informed. All staff have up-to-date first aid training; as a result, they are able to act in the best interest of children in a medical emergency.

Physical development is good. The nursery opens out onto a well-planned outdoor play area. Children have the freedom to go outdoors all day, if they wish to. They are able to benefit from the fresh air and exercise, providing them with the opportunities to develop their large muscle skills. The children run about, balance, climb and ride on wheeled toys as well as being able to play with sand and water play. Children use the garden area to learn how to grow their own plants, including vegetables they can eat.

The food provided is generally very healthy. At snack times, children can choose from a range of fruit and vegetables. Drinking water is always available, so they are able to keep themselves hydrated. Occasionally the children are involved in the preparation of snacks and they always help tidy away once they have finished. Lunch is prepared and cooked in the kitchens at the adjacent school, it includes pasta, potato, meat and vegetable dishes. Children are learning about healthy eating.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a bright and clean environment. The layout of the nursery's play area is child-friendly. For example, the outside area is available for children to use freely every day. The toys and resources are kept in low level storage for children to reach easily. The equipment that the children use is appropriate to their ages and checked regularly for hygiene, safety and cleaned when necessary. Risk assessments carried out daily at the premises, allow children to play safely. Staff are continually developing ways to achieve a balance between freedom and setting safe limits for the children they care for. An emergency evacuation procedure, involving the children, is carried out at regular intervals. This allows them to learn some sense of danger and gain knowledge about how to protect themselves from harm. Children also learn how to follow instructions and keep safe when on the outings and trips arranged by staff. Children are well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and give good priority to children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children really enjoy their time at the nursery and the company of the staff. Children smile, laugh and interact very well with the adults. Staff are happy to provide essential one-to-one time for any child needing it. The walls are decorated with children's work and photographs of

them enjoying a wide variety of activities. There are also brightly coloured information posters, all helping to make the atmosphere homely, friendly and welcoming. Children settle easily at each session.

There are a great variety of appropriate and interesting toys for the children to play with, covering the relevant areas of development. Staff have used Birth to three matters to assess the needs of the under three's. There is an imaginary play area, with dressing-up and small world resources. An art and craft room allows children to experiment with lots of different materials, such as clay and paints. A comfortable section of the play area is where children can rest, relax and look at books or just sit and chat to each other. Adult-led focussed activities are planned daily, for example, asking children to guess how many apples will fit into the larger drawn apple outline, more able children really think carefully about this and arrive at sensible suggestions. The door to the outside space is open throughout the sessions. Children love going in and out as they please, taking some activities outdoors to extend their play. For example, they dress up and role play, using the play house or take toy trucks out to dig in the dirt. Children benefit greatly from being able to choose their own resources within a relaxed atmosphere which allows them to develop at their own pace.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children show a sense of belonging as they greet each other and staff on arrival. They are actively involved in play and activities throughout the sessions. They have a good level of independence, freely selecting resources and equipment for themselves and taking responsibility for their personal care. The children show concern for each other and share activities, allowing others time to finish what they are doing. Many children are able to count correctly to over 20 and show a clear awareness of size and shapes. They enjoy listening to stories, and readily select books to share with each other. Access to a computer allows children to gain knowledge and competency in the use of information and technology equipment. Regular trips, outings and visitors to the group expand on this further, so children become aware of their local community, time and place. Children are progressing very well, supported by the staff's confident knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Overall planning is detailed and covers all the areas of learning. Different themes or topics are included, such as nursery rhymes and tales. This gives children the opportunity to experience new resources, maintaining their attention and interest. For example, the story of The Three Little Pigs has been expanded, using pencil and paper, children draw their own plan of what they want their house to look like. The provision of straw, bricks and wood allow the children to experiment and find out what works best. Children are using their imagination and developing their creative and physical skills. They are also able to test the strength and benefits of the different materials.

Although the use of observation and assessment helps staff meet the needs of children, information regarding their next steps is not consistently used to influence the short term plans. Children benefit from the freedom to enjoy the wide variety of resources made available to them. The staff praise and encourage children to try things for themselves, enabling them to practise and develop their individual skills. Children are able to concentrate on activities for long periods of time. Staff use and adapt their support and questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. Children are being challenged appropriately.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The staff introduce topics to teach children about other cultures. Group and themed activities, together with sufficient resources, help children develop a positive attitude to others. Staff ensure they are able to offer good support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nursery has a co-ordinator who is secure in her understanding of the code of practice. This means staff can plan appropriately for children's individual needs. Children behave well. They are learning to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries. Staff use praise and age appropriate methods to manage behaviour, including explanation and distraction. Staff encourage children to resolve their own differences which helps them learn to take turns and share.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents report that they and their children receive very good care and support from the group. Parents have a good insight into how their children develop, through the regular verbal exchanges with key persons, about their children's well being and achievements. Newsletters and notice-boards advise parents of changes in policy or procedures or other child care issues, such as the Foundation Stage. The nursery has an open-door policy and parents are welcome at any time, to play with their children or talk to staff. Children benefit from parents' involvement in their learning. Staff and parents work together to help children make good progress. The setting fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery clearly displays their Ofsted registration document, along with their public liability insurance policy. The provider ensures that the staff are suitable to work with the children through an adequate recruitment procedure. All staff have been vetted and hold Criminal Record Bureau checks. New staff are regularly monitored and supervised. The nursery has the required paperwork and documentation in place, which are regularly reviewed. However, the current method used to record children's arrival and departure remains inconsistent. All staff have the opportunity to attend child care training and work-shops, ensuring their continued professional development. This helps to ensure the nursery meets the needs of the children and staff. The individual records of both children and staff are stored confidentially in a lockable filing cabinet. The committee is committed to providing quality care for all the children attending the nursery. The manager is experienced and enthusiastic, which in turn motivates the staff. She is continually looking for effective ways to develop and improve the nursery in all areas, especially in the delivery of the Foundation Stage. This has resulted in the review of the current planning system, which will further help improve the learning experiences for children.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. Staff work well as a team and have a clear understanding of their role. Planning covers all areas of learning and all staff are able to have an input. It is flexible and allows for children's interests. Staff are well supported in their role and have access to a range of courses for their personal development. The routine is well balanced to include adult directed and child initiated activities. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The provider had four recommendations raised at their last inspection. The first one was for staff to consider ways to minimise the amount of time children sit in large groups. Children now rarely sit in large groups, however, they enjoy eating their lunch altogether and can choose who they sit with at snack times. Children benefit from these opportunities to socialise with each other.

A second recommendation was for the registration arrangements to show when children, staff and visitors are present. Staff attendance and visitors record are now kept correctly and appropriately. Parents record the arrival and departure times of their children and these details inform a nursery register. However, this current system is not consistently reliable and another recommendation has been raised to further ensure accurate information is recorded by nursery staff.

The third recommendation was for the written record to be signed by parents after medicines are given to their children. Staff now follow a clear procedure and parents signatures are always obtained. Children's health and well-being are protected.

A final recommendation was for the nursery to further develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues, ensuring that they are aware of the local Area Child Protection Committee procedures. The nursery's policies have now been brought in line with current Local Authority Safeguarding Children procedures. Several staff have attended the up-dated training and are clear on what they need to do to protect children. Children's welfare is given good priority.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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.

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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):

- ensure children's arrival and departure times are more clearly recorded, so they can be referred to easily when required

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):

- use the information on children's next steps to influence future play plans, to help ensure their individual developmental needs are met

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