

Little Cherubs

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	129034
Inspection date	21 January 2008
Inspector	Debra Davey
Setting Address	2a Bell Green Lane, London, SE26 5TB
Telephone number	0208 778 3232
E-mail	
Registered person	Deborah Percy
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 satisfactory. 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 Cherubs nursery opened in 2000. It operates from group rooms set out over two floors of a purpose built premises and has use of an enclosed outside play area. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 50 weeks of the year.

The nursery is registered to provide full day care for 44 children under five years. There are currently 52 children aged 10 months to five years on roll of these, 7 are funded 3 year and 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions and most come from the local area. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 14 staff and of these, 11 including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications, three staff member are currently working towards a qualification. The nursery has regular support from an area special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Staff have access to training courses and support services run by the Lewisham Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Lewisham Early Years Advice and Resource Network (LEARN).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health and well-being is generally well supported in the nursery. For example, there are sound procedures for nappy changing and older children are aware that the bathroom routine includes them washing their hands before meals and when visiting the toilet. They are kept well hydrated throughout the day because they have individual beakers for their drinks and older children help themselves to water, from the water dispenser in the pre-school room.

The standard of cleaning of the nursery is not consistent, for example, the flooring which is not sufficiently clean at the beginning of the nursery day. This means that children are exposed to unnecessary germs which presents a risk to their health. However, cleaning of the kitchen area is of a high standard and children enjoy a good range of snacks and home cooked meals which are properly prepared and nutritious. In addition, clear details of children's dietary requirements are displayed in the group rooms which ensures that staff are well informed of their needs and preferences.

Children are well protected in the event of an emergency because the majority of the staff team are trained in first aid. In addition, staff have made use of their training in this area to ensure that appropriate permissions and records are in place regarding the administrations of medications and accident recording. There are arrangements in place to care for children who are ill, and policies for exclusion in the event of sickness are shared with parents. In this way, children are protected because cross infection is minimised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe in the setting because the building is made secure and they are collected by known carers only. A record is kept of visitors to the nursery and there are clear and comprehensive policies in place to ensure children's safety, which are shared with parents. Children enjoy a range of toys and equipment which are made accessible in the group rooms and they learn how to use tools and play equipment safely because adults talk to children, for example, about sitting down to use the scissors. Children are competent in the use of play dough cutters, pencil sharpeners and glue sticks because adults sit with them and supervision is good.

Children also learn about safety rules through good routines; for example, through regular fire drills they know to use the stairs sensibly and where the exit's are located. They have made their own safety notice for "not to run" in the nursery because they have been made aware that this is dangerous. They know that gates used on the staircase must be fastened because staff provide role models to ensure that risks to children are minimised. However, staff do not plan effectively for the outdoor area and as a result some activities are not prepared sufficiently to minimise risks. For example, children's games which involve footballs and bubbles are played in the same area as bikes. This compromises child safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are having fun at the nursery because they are cared for by staff who get to know them well through conversation and attention. This means that younger children arrive happily and settle quickly, gently supported by staff, for example by cuddles, as they part from parents. Most, but not all of the plans for children under three years are detailed and relate to a specific framework, birth to three matters, to ensure that child development is monitored through observation, evaluation and plans for next steps. Where this works best, children are cared for in a bright and inviting environment and enjoy a good range of stimulating activities such as creative and messy play, role play, singing and dancing. They communicate easily with staff and each other and are given appropriate choices in their learning, for example choosing whether or not to join a singing activity. In this way, young children are able to follow their own interests and enjoy support from key worker staff.

Older children are confident when they arrive because they are greeted warmly by staff, greet their friends enthusiastically, and take part in an enjoyable planned circle time to talk about their feelings and activities for the day. This helps children to develop emerging confidence as they get to know staff well and have the opportunity to choose from the activities available. However, too little attention is given to the planning of the outdoor space to enrich the learning environment. As a result children miss a range of challenging activities and exploration to support their learning.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Adults have a satisfactory understanding of the Foundation Stage of learning, so that the children are offered a range of activities which include the six areas. The planning of activities are detailed but lack sufficient distinction to support the learning of older and more able children. In this way children develop and make progress to a satisfactory level. For example, children relish looking at books and they learn to recognise their names when using name cards at snack time, but there are too few opportunities for them to practise mark making and develop early writing skills in everyday play situations. As a result, older children have not yet developed confidence in this area. However, communication and language is fostered because staff talk to children and ask open ended questions to help them learn. Children are making good progress in their creative thinking because there are valuable opportunities for role play in the nursery, both through the use of small world figures and pretend situations such as a shop and domestic play area. They enjoy puppets when staff tell stories which stimulates their imagination and helps them to have fun. They have free access to a range of malleable and creative materials to draw, paint, stick or build with in the art area. For example, using beans and lentils to create a collage in various forms of shape texture and colour. Children enjoy some opportunities to develop their understanding of early mathematics through number rhymes, stories, counting games and displays. However, teaching for children in the understanding of number is less secure during adult led activities, which means that some children do not yet understand simple counting.

Children enjoy opportunities that help them to understand the World around them. For example, an activity which involves cutting an apple develops into an idea to feed the birds. When taken outside by staff, children's natural curiosity is fostered when they find the best place to put the food and look for the bird's nest in the trees. Children make progress in this area because staff plan themes and topics that include the interest that the children show, involving parents, for example, through an international food day theme. Children are making progress in personal,

social and emotional development because they enjoy games which need them to co-operate such as the parachute game, as well as cooking activities and role play. They show consideration for others when they negotiate for space when sitting on the mat to look at books and help one another when building tall towers of bricks. Children's physical skills are fostered when using the outdoor area, they are able to pedal bikes skilfully and use small and large balls, beanbags and hoops. However, there are few opportunities for children to manage their own physical challenges through large construction, balancing and sensory exploration.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff understand policies relating to equality and work within them; the staff team consists of a positive balance of culture and gender. This means that children experience diversity as staff provide positive role models. There are good systems in place to support children attending with additional needs which works well in practice. For example, effective use of an early intervention programme means that specific methods are used to communicate with children such as using picture cards to help them learn the routine. The work is enhanced by advice from outside agencies as well as detailed and useful information which is exchanged with parents. As a result children attending with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well.

Children behave well due to the skilled support of staff. For example, from a young age they are helped to feel secure, for instance by having a familiar toy from home kept close at hand. Older children are kind and considerate to each other as they share equipment; stop their bikes to let another child pass and say sorry when appropriate. Children are involved in discussions about the rules of the nursery and are supported by staff through consistent and relevant praise. Children co-operate well with one another, they play in pairs and small groups during activities, for example, when completing floor puzzles with a member of staff. They share and take turns with the puzzle and respond well to the questions asked about the modes of transport as well as the role of the adults in the picture.

Partnership with parents and carers is good.

Adults are enthusiastic about involving parents in special events of the nursery such as fun days and charity events. They are mindful that parents have different requirements and provide a flexible approach to accommodate, for example, the different working hours of working and student parents. Photographs of the children are displayed and kept in a play book, as well as written information about individual child routines to ensure that parents are well informed about their child's day. The staff team are currently working towards involving parents more fully in the progress of the nursery. For example, they have set up a focus group, "Friends of Little Cherubs" where parents are invited to contribute their ideas and become fully informed about the nursery vision and ethos.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Records are well organised and underpin the smooth operation of the nursery. For example, detailed information is kept on staff which illustrates that they have undergone appropriate suitability checks, training, health declarations and are suitably qualified to work with the children. Staff attend regular appraisal meetings with the manager to identify training needs

and discuss work issues. This ensures that adults are able to update their skills appropriately to support the care of children.

Use of space is not utilised to best effect in all areas of the nursery, for example, the youngest children attending are overcrowded due to poor organisation of room space and resources. As a result, there are times of the day when the routine becomes quite hectic as staff struggle to clear up around the children. The majority of the activities in the pre-school take place in one of the rooms which limits children's ability to have freedom of choice or enjoy some quiet time. In the toddler room, space and resources are well organised and this positively promotes and encourages children to help themselves and develop their confidence as independent learners. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

The manager of the setting has a clear vision for the nursery. As a result, investment in training is planned to improve the skills of the staff team and therefore raise the level of performance, to deliver quality education and care for the children attending. This is based on the settings sound ability to monitor their current level of provision with a view to improvement. For example, the manager has invested time and effort recently in a Kite mark quality assurance scheme which supports reflective practice. The manager and her staff team work well together to provide the children with consistent care routines, which help them feel secure. They show emerging confidence in the provision of a planned programme for the Foundation Stage of Learning and a commitment to building on the strengths and addressing the weaknesses in the provision.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in Feb 2005 the setting was asked to develop child centred practices as well as providing a range of activities and play opportunities, ensuring that toys and play materials are easily accessible. They were asked to improve the presentation of the group rooms and improve hygiene practices. The setting was also asked to develop a record keeping procedure and make records available to parents.

Satisfactory progress has been made in most areas since the last inspection. A range of activities and play opportunities are provided for all age groups and all toys and play materials in the group rooms are accessible to children. This promotes and encourages children to develop confidence and independence as competent learners.

The record keeping and monitoring of child progress is in place and shared with parents both informally and during parent evenings. All other records relating to the efficient management of the setting are in place. The presentation of the groups rooms is generally good overall and the provider has agreed to address some aspects of the nursery cleaning programme.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted received two complaints that required the provider or Ofsted to take action in order to meet the National Standards. The complaints related to National Standard 1 - Suitable Person, National Standard 2 -Organisation National Standard 3 - Care, learning and play and National Standard 6: Safety.

The first complaint raised concerns that the manager does not hold the relevant experience and qualifications for the role, that there are insufficient qualified staff at the nursery and

concerns relating to the planning of activities. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit and two actions were raised under National Standard 2 to make sure there is an effective system for recording child and staff attendance on a daily basis and showing hours of attendance and to make sure there is evidence that minimum staffing ratios and qualifications are met. This is now in place and Ofsted took no further action.

The second complaint raised concerns about adult: child ratios, staffing qualifications, planning and supervision of sleeping children. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit to the premises and set three actions under National Standard 3, National Standard 5 - Equipment and National Standard 6. A satisfactory response to these actions was received explaining the action taken by the provider to ensure that the national standards were being met. Ofsted took no further action.

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. Details of these complaints are recorded in the complaints log held by the provider

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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 that hard surface area such as play room floors and carpets are cleaned thoroughly before children arrive.
- make sure that outdoor play activities are sufficiently planned to promote children's safety at all times.
- make more effective use of available space to enhance the care and education of children.

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to develop early writing skills in everyday play situations.
- make good use of opportunities through play activities to develop children's mathematical understanding.
- ensure that there are sufficient planned activities to support the progress of older children attending.

- develop a specific curriculum for the outdoor play area to foster children's natural curiosity and thereby support active learning.

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