

Lysander House Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	139137
Inspection date	25 March 2008
Inspector	Susan Elizabeth Tovey
Setting Address	Barnwood Close, West Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 7HE
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Registered person	Mary Cord
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Out of School 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Lysander Pre-school opened in 1996. It operates from a purpose-built building situated in a residential area, for serving personnel in the Royal Air Force in Ickenham, in the London Borough of Hillingdon. Children from Forces' families have priority for attending the provision.

A maximum of 16 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:30 to 12:30 during term time. The pre-school is also registered as a play scheme that operates during some school holidays for children under eight years. These sessions are also from 09:30 to 12:30. All children share access to a secure, enclosed outdoor area.

There are currently 24 children on roll, 14 of whom receive funding for nursery education. Children attend a varying number of sessions a week. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also children who speak English as an additional language.

There are four staff employed to work with the children at each session. All the staff have early years qualifications.

The setting receives support from a teacher and development worker from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy as staff implement good practice to ensure the cleanliness of the environment. For instance, they check the toilets regularly throughout the session to ensure they remain in a hygienic condition. The potential for the spread of infection is restricted, because staff ensure parents are fully aware of the setting's sick child policy. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through consistent daily routines and the input of staff. They help themselves to tissues to wipe their runny noses and then dispose of these properly in the bin. Children develop independence as they take themselves off to the bathroom to wash their hands before a cooking activity. They understand that they need to wash their hands after messy play, after using the toilet and before eating.

Staff qualified in first aid are on the premises at all times and clear procedures promote children's welfare after minor accidents. There are highly effective procedures in place to ensure that parents fully inform staff about children's medical requirements. Staff gain parents' written permission to seek emergency medical treatment.

Children bring their own food for snack in their individual lunch boxes. Staff offer guidance to parents on what to provide to promote healthy eating. Snack times are well organised; children sit at tables and eat in a relaxed and social atmosphere. The staff encourage the children to engage in conversation with their peers; as a result the children are increasing their social skills. Children do not become thirsty as their drinking bottles are easily accessible at all times.

Children are developing a positive attitude to exercise, which is enjoyed on a daily basis. They show great delight and excitement when playing outside in the fresh air. Children can choose to play either inside or in the well resourced garden. They have great fun painting and chalking on the fence and pedalling their bikes and cars around the traffic cones and signs on the soft surface play area. Children use a range of equipment and practical life exercises to develop competent small motor control. They pour small quantities of water accurately, clearing up any spills. They use appropriate tools with the play dough and enjoy creative activities, such as painting and sticking.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The pre-school premises are decorated with educational posters, photographs and examples of children's artwork, which helps to create a pleasant environment and adds to children's sense of belonging. Children are cared for in a well organised environment that is comfortably furnished and equipped, enabling the children to make good use of space that is child focussed. The play area is set out with an extensive range of activities, which enables children to make choices independently. The messy room is for art and craft activities, such as painting, sand, dough and collage. The main room has a large role play area, a comfortable book corner and plenty of space for large group time.

Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised because the setting has good safety and security precautions in place. Daily risk assessments are conducted before children arrive in the morning to ensure the premises and garden remain safe. Children are well supervised due to the good ratios and deployment of staff. The entrance gate is kept locked during sessions and parents or visitors ring the bell to gain access. A member of staff supervises the door when children arrive and go home to ensure no children leave unaccompanied. Fire drills are conducted regularly and this ensures children learn how to evacuate the building safely.

Children are safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of child protection issues and the action they must take if they have any concerns. Staff have attended relevant training in the past, and are waiting to attend a refresher course. The pre-school's safeguarding children policy has recently been updated to reflect latest guidance and parents are informed of the setting's responsibility with regard to child protection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy, settled and clearly enjoy their time at pre-school. They engage in a wide range of well-planned activities, offering a good selection of play and learning opportunities. All children have equal access to the same learning opportunities regardless of their age. Activities are adapted to meet their individual needs, for example, less able children are offered good support to help them to achieve tasks and more able children are offered suitable challenges to extend their learning. Children develop very close and warm relationships with the staff, helping to provide a happy and positive atmosphere. Children approach staff confidently for comfort and support and benefit from plenty of individual attention and cuddles. Staff know all the children extremely well and the effective key worker system ensures that all children's developmental progress is closely monitored.

Younger children are supported by very kind and caring staff, who respond to their individual care, learning and welfare needs. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and use it effectively within the setting. Staff maintain a record of the children's progress through individual assessment books, which are shared with parents. Children are developing confidence and self-esteem. Children are becoming competent learners as they participate in imaginary play. They dress up as police and direct traffic in the garden and as fire-fighters, squirting water to put the fire out. Children very much enjoy the wide range of tactile activities offered in the messy room, for example, water play, sand, painting and dough.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children's personal, social and emotional development is a strength of the pre-school. Children occupy themselves well and are motivated learners. They independently move from one activity to another keeping themselves constantly engaged. They use their initiative during play, behave well and understand right from wrong. Children form good relationships with each other, play well together and show care and consideration for others. They demonstrate independence as they tidy away resources, put their coats on for outside play and find their own water bottle when thirsty. Staff are developing their use of planning, to ensure that the children are presented with a variety of activities that have regard for all areas of learning and which focus on specific outcomes. The staff collate information about the children's achievements through observations and assessments. The children's attitude to learning is positive, as they make choices from the activities offered. They

concentrate well during routine activities, such as large group time, and listen carefully to instructions and stories. Children negotiate well with one another whilst waiting to use the computer or go into the messy room. All children have a turn in taking 'Lola' home for the night with a camera and book to record their adventures.

Children are very confident and self-assured. They are secure in their relationships with adults and interact positively with one another. Children are confident speakers and engage easily in conversation as they play. Children order their thoughts well before speaking. They recognise their written names on their name cards and self register. The children enjoy exploring books, both individually and in small groups, throughout the session. The book area is comfortable and cosy, and the books are displayed in an inviting way. Children are captivated during story time, especially by the use of soft toys and puppets as props in the 'Dear Zoo' story. The children eagerly wait their turn to match the animal to the one in the story. This activity was so popular that the story was followed by the action song 'Five Little Men In A Flying Saucer' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star'. The children's interest in early reading is supported by good labelling around the pre-school. Children are helped to recognise their written names as they register themselves on arrival. Children can explore mark-making as a writing and drawing activity at the table or in all role play areas, but there are fewer opportunities for children to label their own work.

Children's mathematical development is good. They are very confident with numbers and counting. Children regularly practise their counting skills through good use of number rhymes and everyday activities. They are familiar with number names and are aware of the order of numbers, both forward and back. Staff frequently encourage children to consolidate their skills further as they ask them to count the number of children already at the activity or the number of fish caught in their fishing net. Children use appropriate mathematical terms to identify shapes, position and as they make comparisons, for example, whether something is big or small. They have opportunities to build with a range of objects and materials. The children enjoy using the computer and complete the 'Animal Sounds' game with ease, by performing simple functions such as clicking and dragging.

Children talk about the baby who visited the pre-school with his mother last week and had a bath. With the aid of the photographs taken, the children are able to recall the sequence of actions in the right order. Children show awareness of time as they move the dial to the correct picture of the daily routine. Through planned activities, the children are becoming aware of cultural and religious events and the customs of countries of the world. They are able to explore, investigate and make discoveries, for example, they use magnifying glasses to look at creatures in the garden. Children are learning about how things grow, as they plant bulbs, beans and sunflowers.

Children enthusiastically take part in physical activities and have excellent opportunities to reinforce and further progress their skills. They demonstrate good spatial awareness when playing outside using wheeled toys, as they adjust speed, change direction and avoid collision. They develop their fine muscle movements as they cut with scissors, manipulate play dough with their hands and use a range of small scale resources. Children enjoy creative activities and use their imagination well as they pretend to bath their babies in the baby clinic or cook sausages in the café. Children take part in many art and craft activities, both outside and in the messy room. All materials are laid out and children are encouraged to make independent choices and explore free creativity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff treat children with respect and equal concern. They seek relevant information from parents to enable them to meet children's care needs and the pre-school's 'getting to know you' booklet acts as a useful means for finding out about children's starting points. Staff make a point of explaining to children about the need to listen to one another and remind them of the importance of handling the new toys with care. This helps children appreciate the needs of others and to have respect for the resources they play with. Children are familiar with the expectation that they help tidy up in preparation for snack time when the 'clean-up' song is played. Most children are happy to do this and announce to other children that they need to tidy up now. Children find out about social diversity and the wider world in which we live through access to resources within the setting and planned topics. These include the celebration of festivals, some of which may be familiar but also others that may be entirely unknown. Children's awareness of their community and the roles people play is fostered by means of walks around the local area, for example, collecting recycling items and shopping trips to the local supermarket. The group also has regular visitors, such as a dad who is a fire-fighter. In the week before the inspection, a mother brought her baby in to feed and bath. The setting works with parents and other agencies as appropriate to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

Children behave very well. They benefit because staff always speak to them calmly and quietly and have a consistent approach when dealing with the minor issues that do occur, for example, they explain to children about the need to share resources. Staff have high expectations of good manners. Older children show a good understanding of the purpose of the timers and explain that, when the sand runs through, it will be someone else's turn to have a go on the computer. Younger children show fascination with these and watch intently as the sand trickles through from top to bottom. Children feel good about themselves as staff praise them, giving reasons why they are pleased with them. They clap one another as they complete the game of Lotto they are playing. Children like receiving stickers.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are welcomed into the group at the start and end of sessions and staff form warm, friendly relationships with them. Parents are provided with written information about the pre-school, in the form of a welcome pack, when their children start at the pre-school. They are able to access policies and procedures easily, as copies of these are available on the notice board, together with general information about childcare, education and children's health matters. Parents are provided with information about the term's themes and intended learning. Information is exchanged informally and is supplemented by a parents' evening once a term where key workers discuss children's progress. Parents are involved in all social events organised by the pre-school, such as the 'Easter Egg Hunt' and 'Sponsored Walks'. Parents and carers speak very positively about the pre-school and the staff caring for their children.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures help to ensure that suitably qualified and experienced staff care for children. However, the registered provider failed to notify Ofsted of the appointment of a new joint manager; this prevents Ofsted from carrying out the required suitability checks and is a breach of regulation. The staff team work well together and have a

high regard for the well-being of the children. All members of staff hold appropriate qualifications and are encouraged to develop their knowledge through ongoing training. They are vigilant to children's needs and ensure children are well supervised.

The joint managers organise the environment well with a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities both inside and in the garden. Children's records are well maintained and confidentiality is considered paramount with respect to children's details; these are well secured in lockable facilities.

The leadership and management of nursery education are good. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. Children's progress is continually monitored and evaluated. Staff are committed to ensuring good standards are maintained and have identified areas for further improvement. There are clear induction procedures in place, which helps to ensure staff are clear about their role and responsibilities in the setting. Staff meetings are held regularly and there are effective communication systems in place. All necessary information is discussed daily.

Policies and procedures help to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the setting was asked to improve the organisation of refreshment time and improve the presentation of the book corner. The pre-school has reviewed the snack time routine and now children sit together at the table. The book corner has been re-organised, with a variety of books attractively displayed in racks on the wall, and comfortable seating is provided. These improvements enhance the organisation of the setting.

At the last nursery education inspection, the setting was asked to provide opportunities for children to develop independence, to ensure children have opportunities to practise writing, and to ensure that children are offered challenges through the activities and teaching strategies provided. The children can now independently access their chosen activities, they self register and put their own coats on to play outside. Children have opportunities to practise writing in all areas of the pre-school, both inside and in the garden. The activity plans show clearly how each activity can be extended to offer challenge to the more able children. These improvements enable the children to progress in all areas of their development.

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 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):

- update safeguarding children training
- ensure Ofsted are notified of the change of manager

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):

- further enhance opportunities for children to mark make and label their own work

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