

Snapdragons Atworth

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	145837
Inspection date	24 January 2008
Inspector	Rachel Edwards
Setting Address	Prospect Farm, Atworth, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 8JW
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Registered person	Snapdragons Nurseries Ltd
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?

Snapdragon Nursery, Atworth opened in 1998. It operates from a converted farmhouse in Atworth, Melksham. The building is equipped to provide full day care for children. The nursery serves the local community and surrounding areas. There are three main playrooms, one communal playroom, a fully enclosed garden for outdoor play and a kitchen where food is prepared daily.

The nursery is registered to provide full day care for no more than 31 children at any one time. There are currently 50 children on roll, including 12 children in receipt of nursery education funding. The nursery supports children with additional needs.

The nursery open five days a week all the year round, except bank holidays and between Christmas and the New Year. The sessions operate from 07:30 to 18:30.

There are 14 staff, who work directly with the children. The manager has a level 4 qualification in early years. The owner is a qualified teacher with early years professional status, twelve of the other staff are qualified to at least level 2. There are two staff on training programmes.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's good health is generally well supported whilst they are at nursery. They enjoy a healthy diet and have daily access to fresh air and exercise. Staff generally follow hygienic procedures but some aspects of hygiene need to be improved.

Children really enjoy the range of healthy and nutritious meals that are freshly prepared by the nursery cook each day. Any special diets are accommodated. Children and staff sit together for meals and staff gently encourage children to try new tastes. They talk about healthy eating and develop an interest in food through planned topics and cooking activities. Babies are encouraged to start feeding themselves and older children in pre-school skilfully manage child-sized knives and forks. Children are able to help themselves to water from named drinking bottles which they can reach. Babies are offered frequent drinks but they cannot always see their bottles which makes it difficult for them to communicate easily when they need a drink.

All children have at least one and usually two sessions of outdoor play each day. There is a safely enclosed area with an all weather surface, that is clean and dry regardless of the weather. Here children enjoy scooting and pedalling at speed, skilfully managing to avoid most collisions. There is a wide selection of play equipment, such as small climbing frames, tunnels and playhouses. Children use these imaginatively but the climbing equipment is not sufficiently challenging for older and more agile children. Children sometimes enjoy using other areas of the owner's garden, for example, enthusiastically collecting mud and sticks to make a model hut and growing and tending plants. However, full use is not made of the available outdoor space to give children more opportunities to learn across all areas of the curriculum. They cannot, for example, choose whether to play inside or out. Babies regularly enjoy going for walks in their buggies around the village. This provides many new and exciting experiences, for example, visiting the cows at the local farm.

Most areas of the nursery are kept clean and well maintained and staff generally follow good procedures to protect children from illness and cross infection. However, some lapses in hygiene put children at an increased risk. For example, children are taught to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Older children are encouraged to manage this independently but they are not always supervised closely enough to make sure they wash hands thoroughly using soap, especially important at times when there is a sickness bug in the nursery. Children and staff should wash hands in warm water but the toddler toilets had no hot water at inspection and the wash basin in the kitchen is too hot to use. The tiles around one of the children's basins have lifted away and are not clean underneath. At least half the staff have current first aid certificates and any accidents are recorded and parents informed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in premises that are bright and welcoming and generally well maintained. Photographs and examples of children's art work are displayed around the nursery and parents notice boards are informative and up to date so that children and their families feel welcome. They are in rooms with children of similar ages so that they can only access toys that are safe and suitable for their age and stage of development. In all rooms, children are able to choose

from a good range of play resources that capture their interest and help them develop well in all areas.

Staff have carried out thorough risk assessments of the premises, both inside and out and taken steps to reduce any hazards. For example, the nursery is secure at all times and parents and children can only enter when let in by a member of staff. A safety gate stops children wandering into the kitchen and no hot drinks are allowed in areas used by children. There are good arrangements to keep children safe whilst on walks around the village. Children are encouraged to learn to keep themselves safe, for example, by handing broken toys to staff and helping to tidy up toys to prevent trips. They regularly practise emergency evacuation drills and the older children are able to describe the procedure. Children's attendance is generally recorded promptly as they arrive and leave. However, on occasions, children who are making the transition to a room with an older age group, are not recorded on the register of either room at the beginning of the day. This puts children at risk as there is not an accurate record of the numbers of children in the building at all times.

Senior staff have a very good understanding of child protection issues and the nursery's role in safeguarding children. Other staff receive training and they would be able to recognise signs of abuse or neglect and follow the agreed procedure. In this way children's welfare is protected by the nursery.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Most children enjoy the time they spend at the nursery. They come in happily and are warmly greeted by staff and their friends. Children of all ages are able to choose activities and reach toys they would like to play with and explore. For example, a baby is delighted as he watches glitter floating in a bottle of coloured water; a group of toddlers choose to use brushes for their paintings and pre-school children play imaginatively with animals on the floor, talking together as they develop their story. All children have lots of opportunities for sensory play, for example, pre-school children are fascinated as they spoon up scented 'gloop' and watch it drip from their fingers, whilst toddlers like to slide their hands about in shaving foam.

Very good relationships are evident between the children and staff. Children confidently find staff when they need help or comfort and this is warmly given. Babies are cuddled and sung to and they are gently encouraged to be more independent as they explore the space and objects around them. Toddlers show increasing independence, for example as they wash their hands or manage to eat their lunch with little help. Children learn good social skills, they gradually learn to play cooperatively, sharing and taking turns with others. Although children spend most of their time with their own age group, they do have regular opportunities to mix with older or younger children. For example, a baby visits the pre-school children to watch them having lunch, and this sparks a conversation on siblings, leading to one of the children going to visit his little brother in the baby room.

Staff understand that children learn through meaningful play and they generally plan interesting, age appropriate activities, so that children are keen to take part. Staff caring for babies and toddlers follow guidance given in the Birth to three matters framework, which ensures they plan to help children's development in all areas. Staff throughout the nursery, regularly observe and note what children can do and in this way monitor children's development. However, this information is not always used effectively by staff to plan activities that will help each child progress at their own pace and following their own interests.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage of their education. Staff plan a varied and usually interesting programme of activities, which cover the six required areas of learning. Most resources are accessible to children, including craft materials. However, children are not always aware of what is available and staff do not consistently encourage them to use materials imaginatively to extend their learning across all areas of the curriculum.

Children understand that print carries meaning, for example, as they recognise their own and other's names. They enjoy group stories but do not frequently choose to look at books on their own. The available books are rather worn and there are no reference books or magazines to further capture their interest. They have opportunities to make marks but these are mostly adult led activities, such as tracing over words written by staff. Not all children, especially the more active, enjoy these structured activities. There is a writing table but it is not attractively presented. Children are not encouraged to write freely for a purpose, for example, by making shopping lists in the home corner or by writing their names on art work. Children are able to produce individual pieces of art, using a variety of materials. Staff value children's efforts and many examples are displayed, raising children's self esteem. However, the area for arts and crafts is small and difficult for children to move around and not all resources they may need are easily accessible.

Children count well and show an interest in number activities. They use numbers and mathematical language spontaneously in their play and explore volume, shape and weight, for example, through weighing ingredients for cooking activities or playing in the sand and water. However, children have limited opportunities to use their growing mathematical understanding to solve simple problems as part of the daily routine. Children increase their knowledge and understanding of the world around them through opportunities including nature walks, growing seeds found in snack time fruit and tending plants. They learn about how others live, for example, enjoying making mud huts and other houses from natural and recycled materials. They use a computer to help them learn about information technology and many children are adept at operating simple programmes. However, at times, children are left playing on the computer for extended periods with little staff interaction.

Staff have worked on developing their observation techniques. They frequently watch and assess children's achievements, although they tend to do these more often during adult led activities. As a result staff tend to underestimate the value of children's own choice of free play and they do not interact sufficiently with them during free play, by asking questions, suggesting ideas and offering new resources so that children are encouraged to explore ideas in depth, develop their imagination and come up with solutions to their everyday problems.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children receive a warm welcome in this nursery and are included in all developmentally appropriate activities. Most members of staff are designated 'key workers' for small groups of children. Their role is to have special responsibility for the welfare and learning of individual children and to liaise with their parents. However, this role is not working effectively for all children, resulting in staff not knowing all children as well as they should and some children's individual needs not being fully met. This has been exacerbated by a significant change of staff in recent weeks. Children learn about their local community through walks and visits in the

locality, for example, to the fire station and by meeting a range of visitors, such as a vicar, district nurse, pilot and policeman. They also learn to value differences and similarities between themselves and others and learn about other cultures, through playing with a suitable range of resources, that positively reflect other cultures, ethnicity and disability. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children generally behave well in the nursery. Staff offer lots of praise and encouragement and children know their efforts are valued. Toddlers receive very good support as they learn to share and take turns. Older children are usually well behaved and follow instructions well, for example, they willingly help to tidy away toys. However, they sometimes behave less well, for example, trampling on toys and this is usually as a result of staff not consistently challenging poor behaviour and not giving clear enough guidance about what is expected of them.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive good information about all aspects of the nursery, there is an informative welcome pack and notice boards in all the rooms as well as a more general board in the entrance hall. Parents with babies are given daily diary sheets with information such as feed and sleep times and nappy changes. Staff are available at the beginning and end of every day to talk with parents and the nursery values parents comments on the quality of provision, for example, they are invited to complete a questionnaire each year. There are twice yearly parents evenings, when they have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with the staff. Children's achievements are attractively recorded in their 'all about me' books, which include observations made by staff, photographs and examples of children's work to share with parents. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, for example, staff suggest parents grow vegetable tops with their child at home as part of a topic on food and this helps consolidate children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery has effective systems for the appointment of suitable staff, who are well qualified and take advantage of ongoing training so that they provide a range of interesting activities that help children enjoy learning through play. All required policies and procedures are in place and made readily accessible to parents. Most records are accurately kept, although the daily register is not sufficiently accurate. The owner maintains a strong interest in the nursery, visiting daily and providing clear leadership to her team of staff. The manager has only been in post for a few weeks but is already having a positive impact on the quality of care and education provided. The enthusiastic staff are committed to developing good care for all the children and the development of an effective system of key workers will help them provide this. Staff ratios never fall below the minimum requirement, which ensures children receive plenty of individual attention. The provider meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The current pre-school supervisor is only recently in post and has the difficult task of temporarily covering for a period of sickness. She is gaining confidence to adapt existing plans so that they can more flexibly meet children's changing and differing needs. The curriculum is monitored to make sure that it is broad and balanced and children's achievements are routinely recorded. The nursery has a strong ethos of self evaluation and it clearly recognises its strengths and areas for development. For example, they belong to a recognised accreditation scheme and have achieved the Investors in People award. They welcome support from outside professionals and act on advice to further improve their practice.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, one recommendation regarding the recording of medication, was made to improve the standard of care. Parents now give consent prior to any medication being given to children, which ensures they are well informed and that their wishes have been followed. It also protects children as it ensures any previously given medication is recorded, reducing the risk of accidental overdosing.

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.

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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 children's hours of attendance are promptly recorded
- develop the role of the key worker, to build relationships with parents and to ensure that children's individual needs are well met
- improve hygiene by ensuring the area around the toddler basins is hygienically clean; children's hands are always cleaned before eating and that there is running warm water for staff and children to wash their hands, including in the kitchen

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):

- make more effective use of children's developmental records to plan and provide activities that will help each child progress, taking account of their interests and personality (also applies to care)
- improve the quality of staff's interactions with children, especially during free play so that children are challenged and encouraged to think by asking questions, suggesting ideas and offering new resources

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