

Little Fishes Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY270171
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Inspector	Diane Mary O'Neill
Setting Address	Lodge Farm Community Centre, Off Crestwood Road, Lings, Northamptonshire, NN3 8JJ
Telephone number	01604 495292preschool
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Registered person	The Trustees of Store House Community Trust
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?

Little Fishes pre-school group opened in 1987, moving to these premises in 2003. It operates from Lodge Farm Community Centre, Lings, Northampton and serves the local community. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group opens five days a week during term time. Sessions are from 09:30 until 12:00 and 13:00 to 15:30. Children attend a variety of morning or afternoon sessions. All children share access to facilities for outdoor play.

There are currently 39 children aged from two years six month to five years on roll and of these 19 children are funded. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven members of staff. Of these six hold appropriate early years qualifications at Level 2 or higher and four are working towards a qualification or higher level qualification. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children effectively learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-planned daily routines. They develop their understanding through watching others, discussion and through positive role modelling by the adults. All the children have a good awareness of how and why we wash our hands and ensure they are washed before having their snack and lunch, as well as after taking part in messy activities.

Children's health and hygiene is very well maintained as staff are fully aware of their individual health care needs and take appropriate steps to care for them if they are ill or have an accident. This is further supported by the informative written sickness policy which clearly references stipulated exclusion periods for childhood communicable diseases. This is openly shared with parents as are all documented first aid and emergency procedures which are recorded using appropriate forms. A majority of staff hold current first aid training and a rolling programme ensures they are aware of the correct procedures to follow to continually maintain children's health and care needs.

Children's dietary needs are effectively met through the provision offering mid morning and afternoon snacks in a café style. This provides them with choice as well as developing their independence as they help themselves to plates and cups and the interesting food which they are encouraged to try to develop their taste experiences. For example, the children try bread-sticks and various fruits. The pre-school works hard to develop the children's healthy eating by working within the local authority healthy eating programme. Children remain well-hydrated as drinks are freely available throughout the day.

Children enjoy a well planned and stimulating range of equipment to promote their physical development both inside and outside. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework guidance in a successful manner to enable the younger children to experience the same physical play opportunities as older children. For example, space is organised to enable positive movements, such as running, kicking of balls, and opportunities to develop their confidence in using the sit and ride equipment, scooters and flower pot stilts which enable the children to learn about balancing. Children clearly enjoy using the garden whatever the weather.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where their safety and welfare is paramount to the organisation of the pre-school. Staff are very vigilant when recognising hazards both inside and outside and take positive steps to minimise these. Risk assessments are carried out and all the staff share in the responsibility for keeping children safe. Within staff meetings health and safety is discussed so that staff are continually reminded of their responsibility to keep children safe. Staff practise evacuation procedures with all the children, however these are not done on a regular basis, therefore children are not fully protected. Access to the premises is well monitored through the supervision and management of the entrance area. Visitors to the pre-school are requested to provide identification and to record their presence on site in the visitors' book. Parents also have to buzz the door bell to be let in by staff to the building which enables them to protect the children in their care.

Children use a broad range of safe, good quality and developmentally appropriate toys, furniture and equipment to meet all areas of children's development. These are well organised throughout the setting in child height storage units to encourage children to become independent and gain safe access to their resources. The children are encouraged to help tidy toys away and notify an adult if something is broken. Sensitive reminders by staff encourage children to share in their responsibility for their own safety and that of others. Children have excellent access to a free flow play environment allowing them to make the choice of where and what they play with. The inside play area is very spacious, bright, airy and well organised making it an interesting, happy and relaxed environment for the children. Outside the children have very good access to a fully enclosed area that is monitored at all times by staff to ensure their overall safety and well-being.

Children are well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection policies and procedures and give high priority to children's welfare. Staff are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff and documentation is in place to support them in the event of any concerns. The pre-school has a rolling training programme in place to ensure staff members' knowledge and understanding is continually up to date so children's welfare is fully safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children eagerly arrive and settle in this vibrant and well-organised setting. Efficient and experienced staff are on hand to sensitively support any children who are unsettled. Staff enthusiastically greet the children and their parents making them feel very welcome. The entrance area is very inviting as there are informative notice boards and comprehensive information available to the parents.

Children are happy, contented, motivated and thrive well in this secure, stimulating and very caring environment. They confidently explore and access the wide range of stimulating activities and are beginning to form firm relationships with staff and the other children. Staff have a secure awareness of the "Birth to three matters" framework and this has a positive effect on the younger children's enjoyment and achievements. Staff plan activities in line with this framework and are beginning to gain sufficient knowledge about what young children can learn. However, further development in their systems for recording children's achievements would enable more focussed planning for the children's next steps within their learning using this framework.

The children enjoy exploring the extensive and interesting array of activities both inside and outside of the setting which enables them to begin to develop their investigation and exploratory skills. They show wonder and surprise at what they see and feel when exploring the sand tray and making their pictures in the craft area. They are clearly confident with using the computer and get immense satisfaction when they archive the end goal. Staff are totally committed and dedication to the children which has immense positive effects on their learning and contentment.

Children have excellent opportunities to explore their world through various play activities and are exceedingly well supported by the dedicated staff team. Children develop their communication skills as they respond to others around them. For example, the children enjoy dancing along to music from the computer, which causes lots of laughter. Children are animated and eager to take part in activities for example; they enjoy hunting for toys hidden in the dry

pasta play. Their mobility is extended through excellent support and direction offered by staff as they move freely and easily from the inside play to the outside play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff use their appropriate knowledge and experience of the Foundation Stage to enrich the experiences for all children with well organised and planned activities and resources. Staff use an effective range of teaching methods to motivate children so they are keen to learn and make progress. This is successfully achieved by a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated play which ensures children are motivated and engaged in a broad range of developmentally appropriate activities. Staff generally use the observations of the children's abilities and include this within their planning. However, planning does not clearly reflect children's starting points and expected next steps which therefore limits the overall value of the planning.

Planning is based on topics and is well balanced across the six areas of learning and is positively linked to the stepping stones. Assessment is based upon meaningful observations recorded on children's records of progress and staff informally consider the next steps in children's learning to use as an aid to future planning. The consistency of the staff team positively impacts on the children's high levels of confidence and security. Sensitive settling in procedures build on this giving children confidence to participate in the varied and interesting activities on offer.

Children enjoy circle time and some are confident to join in discussions. For example, talking about the toys they have brought in from home. Staff use picture and sign boards to help children with learning and speech difficulties to be part of the group. For example, children were able to choose a favourite nursery rhyme to sing using this system. Staff know the children well and know when to step back and let children take over an activity, creating a realistic balance between adult-led and child-initiated play. For example, the children were pretending to make cups of tea in the home corner and happily involve the staff in their play. The on going discussions between the children helps them extend their use of their imagination and communication skills within their play.

Children are totally absorbed and happy in the activities provided as they have a strong sense of the pre-school routines. For example, as they arrive they hang up their coats and bags and confidently manoeuvre themselves around the room and make individual choices of the set out play materials. Children are developing friendships and seek out friends to share activities with. Their behaviour is very good as the children are absorbed within their play.

Children have good opportunities to use maths within everyday play experiences. For example, they use counting bears to look at size, patterns and recognition of colour. Children have opportunities to use different sizes and numbered pieces of puzzles depending on their individual abilities to help them recognise shape and the fitting of pieces together to make a picture. Children spend time discovering their mark-making skills and are starting to enjoy books and stories. Simple labels around the room and seeing their names on their name cards which they choose at snack times help develop children's early word recognition.

Children confidently use the computer with age-appropriate programmes and use phones and play tills in role play. However, opportunities for children to widen their knowledge and understanding of the world through topics and activities, is not fully implemented by the staff, therefore, children's learning is compromised. Children have good opportunities to explore their creativity while enjoying a range of media and materials. For example they use different

materials to create pictures and their own art work which is proudly displayed on the walls of the pre-school. Overall, children make good progress in their learning and achieve well given their capability and starting points.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children show a strong sense of belonging as they warmly greet staff and each other upon arrival at the pre-school. They attend from a variety of backgrounds and are highly valued as individuals and their needs are effectively met through the very committed and supportive staff team. The staff team ensure that some of the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as including some information about the wider community and some familiar and unfamiliar festivals. However, this is an area for further improvement to enable children's learning and understanding to be expanded.

The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and works closely with the parents, outside agencies and within individual children's care plans. Staff are very proactive at designing systems to enable children to be able to communicate. For example, staff have devised a picture card and signs which enables all staff and children to do some degree of signing which helps with children's overall communication. They have taken videos of some children for their parents to enable them to see what their children have achieved in pre-school. Parents are so pleased they have even shown it to the teachers of schools the children are moving onto to help them see what they can do. The visual evidence works in a very proactive way for the children.

Children's behaviour can vary considerably within the pre-school; however, good role models and outstanding staff support for the children ensures that any incident is dealt with calmly and with consideration for all involved. There is an excellent team spirit throughout the pre-school with children getting on with one another, playing happily together, being respectful of each other and sharing resources. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. This contributes significantly to children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. Parents are given an extremely warm welcome into the pre-school where staff are on hand to discuss any issues and readily share information. For example, staff carry out a home visit before a child starts at the pre-school so they can get as much information about the child, as well as meeting them and their family. Parents are given an informative prospectus, there are news letters and notice board and parents are encouraged to speak with their child's key worker at any time and see their individual child's folder. By gaining this information it gives them an understanding of how their child will make progress and how they can continue to support their children's learning at home.

Parents enthusiastically speak of the pre-school's open door policy, the friendly and open attitude of the staff team and their professionalism. They are immensely amazed at the resourcefulness and wide range of activities and resources that the children have to play with as well as helping them thrive in their learning. This promotes the positive relationships which impact on the children's sense of well-being and security within the setting. The availability of informative documentation and notice boards extends the pre-schools effectiveness in keeping parents well informed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Children's care is greatly enhanced by the strong management and committed and dedicated staff team. This benefits all the children as they move through the pre-school on to school. The staff team are very committed to enhancing their knowledge through extensive training. The management team are responsible for a majority of aspects within the pre-school, including staff supervision and ratios and deployment, operational plan, staff training and qualifications. All staff have considerable knowledge of the National Standards which they are committed to apply throughout the pre-school, this is further enhanced by their knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. High regard for the well-being of the children, their group sizes, adult support, enjoyment and achievements contributes to the overall effectiveness of the organisation of the pre-school.

The premises are extremely well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is set out in a very inviting manner for the children. Therefore they obtain the maximum enjoyment and play opportunities that will enhance all areas of their development and learning. Children arrive and are keen to participate in the pre-school lifestyle and freely move around talking to staff and their peers. Staff work very effectively as a team, moving with the flow of the children where they can actively involve themselves in the children's play and support them when required.

Well-organised records and documents ensure children's welfare and enables parents to play an active role in their child's care. The required documentation is successfully organised and in place to support the management and efficient running of the setting. There are very informative notice boards and leaflets for parents as well as excellent day to day communication to share information about their children.

Staff are extremely knowledgeable and have a very good understanding of child development. Most of the staff hold relevant childcare qualifications and extend their own professional development through access to training and childcare literature. For example attending training such as, child protection. They are further developing their practice and knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum to enable them to extend, challenge and further enhance children's learning and development. Overall the provision meets the needs of all the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to ensure that children can play safely outside. The pre-school has devised and carries out a daily risk assessment to ensure children's safety. There were also asked to ensure that the child protection procedure complies with local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures. The pre-school has now a working policy and procedure in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance. This ensures they can fully protect the children in their care.

Lastly the pre-school was asked to make available to parents a written statement that provides details of the procedure to be followed if they have a complaint, which includes details of the regulator, Ofsted. There is now a fully detailed complaints policy with guidance of procedures to follow and the Ofsted poster on display so parents know the regulators number should they have any concerns.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint received by Ofsted. Concerns were raised regarding the inappropriate handling of a child displaying unwanted behaviour and were reported to the police who passed these concerns to Ofsted. The police having interviewed staff gave Ofsted details of the concerns raised and these related to National Standard 11 Behaviour and National Standard 13 Child Protection. We asked the provider to report to Ofsted within 7 days. The provider reported within the given timescale and details of actions taken were reviewed. As a result a letter was sent to the provider requiring further clarification on action taken which included how and when a child is restrained and how a child is removed from a situation of conflict. The report demonstrates that the provider meets the National Standards and remains qualified for registration.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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 fire drills are practised on a regular basis with children
- further develop systems for recording children's development in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

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):

- develop plans to expand children's learning opportunities in the knowledge and understanding of the world in relation to the celebration of different festivals and customs
- further develop planning to clearly show where children's next learning steps will be.

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