

Grasmere Nursery and Tadpoles Baby and Toddler Unit

Inspection report for early years provision

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Registered person	Luton Borough Council
Type of inspection	Childcare
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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Tadpoles Baby and Toddler Unit is part of Grasmere Nursery School and Children's Centre. It opened in September 2002. Full day care is delivered for children from birth to three years in the Tadpoles Unit and wrap-around care is provided for three -and-four-year-olds at Grasmere Nursery. The school is located in the Icknield area of Luton. A maximum of 15 babies and 25 toddlers may attend the Tadpoles Unit at any one time. A maximum of 16 children can access wrap-around care alongside the educational provision in the main nursery school. There are several fully enclosed outdoor play areas for the children.

There are currently 70 children from six weeks to under three years on roll in the Tadpoles Unit. In addition, 53 children aged three and four years access wrap-around care at Grasmere during the week. The setting currently supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is able to support children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery and unit is open 47 weeks a year (two weeks break in summer and at Christmas and one week at Easter). Opening hours are daily from 08.00 to 18.00. Children can attend for a variety of sessions, which includes combinations of day care, breakfast, lunch and after school club. The group is open to all children in the local and wider community.

The Tadpoles Unit employs 22 staff who work with children on a shift system. Of these, 17 staff including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The wrap-around care provision at Grasmere Nursery employs 10 staff across the day, of whom two hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery receives support from a qualified teacher and the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. The premises are maintained in an immaculately clean state, tables are regularly sprayed with antibacterial spray and the toilets are kept clean and hygienic. Parents and visitors are encouraged to use hand gel when entering the Tadpoles Unit. Staff wear latex gloves when changing nappies and dealing with body fluids. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and information about infectious childhood diseases is displayed in the entrance foyer of the Tadpoles Unit. Children learn about germs and healthy living through the daily routines. Staff remember to promote discussion about the reasons for hand washing and soap and individual towels are provided for children. Tissues are readily available for keeping noses clean.

Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency. All staff hold current and suitable first aid qualifications and there is a rolling training programme which ensures that certificates are renewed before they expire. The first aid boxes are accessible and suitably stocked. Regular checks of the first aid boxes ensure that supplies do not run out and that sterile dressings past their expiry date are discarded and replaced. Staff conscientiously record all accidents and incidents and accident record forms have been recently reviewed and improved to ensure children's safety and welfare.

All the children enjoy frequent free-flow play between the classroom and the outdoor areas. This means that children have ample opportunity to participate in daily indoor and outdoor activities. They learn to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through a generally appropriate level of challenge. A broad range of outdoor play equipment is changed daily and provides opportunities for children to climb and balance. Children use bikes, tricycles, rockers and cars. Babies are taken outside in their buggies to access fresh air and watch the older children at play. Tired children are able to rest and sleep in accordance with their needs.

Children benefit from healthy snacks and their dietary needs are met because staff work well with parents. Information is requested about parents wishes for their child's diet and any allergies and special requests are duly noted on photographs displayed in the milk kitchen. The menu is displayed for parents' information and staff provide daily information about quantities of food eaten. Meals in the Tadpoles Unit are prepared and cooked on site, using fresh ingredients delivered weekly. Meals in the Grasmere Nursery are brought in from a local school and breakfast, teas and snacks are prepared by staff in the family room kitchen. Meal times are being used to good effect as a learning time for children, promoting social skills and the development of independence. For example, children serve themselves and pour their own drinks. Children do not become thirsty whilst playing because they can indicate their wishes or help themselves to a drink from named drinking cups kept on the trolley near the kitchen.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are kept very safe in the provision because staff give excellent priority to security issues. Children's safe arrival and departure is well-supervised although actual times of attendance are not always recorded appropriately. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills periodically. However, in view of the differing patterns of children's attendance, particularly in the Grasmere Nursery, drills are not currently practised with sufficient frequency to ensure the safety of the children and staff. Staff monitor visitors to the Tadpoles Unit by keeping a visitors book. Relevant risk assessments are completed on a daily basis and the outdoor areas are thoroughly checked before use.

Children are warmly welcomed and well-cared for in a stimulating, suitably safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment. The staff have put up photographs, posters and pictures to make the classrooms attractive for children and there are bright displays of children's work which enhance the environment. Staff arrange equipment and toys to ensure that children can access resources in the rooms easily and independently.

Children's welfare is properly safeguarded because they are protected by vigilant and caring, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Some staff have received suitable training in this field and relevant and current reference information is readily accessible.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their play and learning because staff are confident, enthusiastic and highly-skilled in their childcare practice. Staff provide a broad range of worthwhile play activities and first-hand experiences which allow children to build on their natural curiosity as learners and engage children throughout the setting in the learning process. Staff encourage and build children's vocabulary through constant praise and recognition as they support play, skilfully adapting their level of language and questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. For example, children in the Tadpoles Unit enjoy a focus activity to discover 'treasures' hidden in the sand. They squeal with delight as they magically uncover a spider and then mimic the new word modelled by staff. Another group of babies explore the tactile properties of jelly, mashed potato, cooked pasta quills and cooked spaghetti. Staff encourage them to repeat words such as 'sticky' and 'slippery' to express their experiences. Toddlers experiment with water wheels and funnels in the water tray and others use paint and play dough. The breakfast club provides a gentle start to the day for young children. Tea time club provides the opportunity to play in the home corner, use the computer or 'chill out' in front of children's television at the end of a busy day.

Children receive excellent attention throughout the sessions and build strong relationships with the staff and each other. The staff know when to stand back and when to intervene with appropriate support for children. For example, when children are getting their coats on to go outside, staff begin to fasten a zip, a toggle or a button and then encourage the children to do this for themselves, thus fostering independence in personal care skills. The head teacher has thoughtfully arranged staffing to ensure continuity of care for children moving between the various elements of care provision in the Grasmere Nursery. The manager of the Tadpoles Unit always ensures that a familiar staff member accompanies a child moving from the babies area to the toddler area. These measures help children to feel safe and secure. In the Tadpoles

Unit, planning and assessment documentation is appropriately based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff compile thorough record profiles of children's developmental progress and achievements, accumulating a wealth of useful information and a good understanding of individual needs and home circumstances. However, these useful resources do not accompany the children as they move across to the Grasmere Nursery at the age of three-years-old. This means that staff cannot use this information to plan for the next steps for the children's play, learning and development and potentially compromises children's continuity of care.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children and their families are treated with equal respect and concern and the pre-school reviews it's equal opportunities provision regularly. All children are encouraged to participate in all activities. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of others through simple planned activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. Children participate in art and craft activities connected with celebrations and taste cultural foods. Positive images are displayed around the setting and sufficient resources are in place to promote children's awareness of diversity.

Children who have varying needs receive good support from the on-site children's centre. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and communication and information exchange takes place within each aspect of the provision. Children's learning difficulties and/or disabilities are recognised and met sensitively. Children who may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision.

Staff provide good role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Children are well-behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring staff and any adverse behaviour is corrected using positive language.

Staff work really hard to develop a positive partnership with parents to support children. Staff are extremely friendly and actively promote warm and trusting relationships with parents and carers. Parents are kept well informed through newsletters, daily communication sheets and discussions with staff. This ensures they are able to check that their child's needs are being met and they can feel confident in the ability of the staff to provide appropriate care. Extensive information is available for parents on a daily basis, because the notice boards are used extremely well to display a wealth of information. Parents may elect to serve on the Governing Body and are warmly welcomed at any time. A suitable complaints procedure is in place and the system for recording complaints is in place.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Positive outcomes are promoted for children through the generally effective organisation of the setting. However, historical differences between the two parts of the setting mean that there is not enough positive communication and exchange of expertise, knowledge and information to effectively support and facilitate the smooth transition of children from Tadpoles to Grasmere. Self-evaluation and monitoring systems are not yet sufficiently established to ensure consistent progress towards the highest standards of integrated childcare and education.

Nevertheless, children obviously feel at home and at ease in the Tadpoles and Grasmere environment. This means they are confident to initiate and extend their own play. Planning is essentially flexible and promotes children's care and development.

The head teacher implements suitably robust systems to ensure that children are cared for by staff who have been suitably vetted. Recruitment and induction procedures are suitably robust. The staff team are well-qualified and work effectively as a team to promote children's health, enjoyment and achievement at the setting. Appropriate documentation underpins the successful organisation of the settings and helps staff in their day to day work with the children, providing a valuable source of guidance and reference. However, the registration system does not record the hours of attendance of children and staff and this may compromise their safety when moving from one aspect of the provision to another. The present system does not always provide clear evidence that appropriate numbers of qualified staff are supervising children in the wrap-around care provision. Taken overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection of day care, the setting was asked to address five recommendations. These involved the development of policies and procedures and the development of procedures for documenting and recording safety checks; ensuring that there are sufficient staff with an appropriate first aid qualification; the keeping of written medication records and requesting written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment.

Considerable attention has been given to securing the improved welfare of children with regard to accidents and medication. A complete review of accident and incident documentation has taken place. Forms for permissions and allergies have been updated as well as a full accident or incident form which includes space for the parent to sign and reminders to staff of when to use the Borough forms and the need to notify Ofsted. A separate form is also in place for any head injury which needs to be countersigned by the Head Teacher or the manager. Accidents are monitored weekly at staff meetings. Written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment is requested on the Health details form. A rolling programme of staff training now ensures that all staff attend appropriate first aid training and that they are enrolled on a renewal course before their certificate expires.

Policies and procedures include further detail in line with the National Standards to secure the safe and efficient running of the provision. The local authority has provided an on-line safety check monitoring program which the head teacher has chosen to back up with hard copy log books. Although the program provides a reminder to the user when checks and drills are due, it does not take into account the particular circumstances of the attendance patterns of children in the setting. The issue of increased frequency of drills is raised as a recommendation following this inspection.

Overall, the actions taken have significantly improved the quality and standards of day care for children.

Complaints since the last inspection

On 18 May 2007, concerns were raised about an injury to a child.

These concerns relate to National Standard 4 - Physical environment, National Standard 5 - Equipment, National Standard 6 - Safety, National Standard 7 - Health and Hygiene and National

Standard 12 - Partnership with Parents and Carers. Ofsted made an unannounced visit to the provision on the 21 May 2007. As a result, four actions were set.

The provider 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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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):

- increase the frequency of fire drills to improve the safety of children and staff
- improve the system for registering children and staff attendance across all aspects of the provision, showing hours of attendance
- improve positive communication and exchange of expertise, knowledge and information between the two parts of the setting to effectively support and facilitate the smooth transition of children from Tadpoles to Grasmere and to ensure consistent progress towards the highest standards of integrated childcare and education.

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