

The Little Caterpillars

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY240683
Inspection date	06 February 2008
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Little Caterpillars Day Nursery opened in 2002. It operates from two rooms in an annexe site located within Hillcross Primary School. The Little Caterpillars offers children wrap around care consisting of a breakfast club, a pre-school, an after school club and a play scheme in the school holidays. The setting serves the local area and gives priority to children attending Hillcross primary school. For the purpose of this inspection only the nursery and some of the after school club was observed.

The setting may care for a maximum of 40 children at any one time and currently have 48 children on roll aged two to five years. Of these one receives nursery education funding. The breakfast and after school facilities may care for a maximum of 32 children at any one time aged five to eight years and currently have 63 children on roll. Children may attend for a variety of sessions.

The nursery opens 5 days per week, all year round with the exception of Christmas and bank holidays. Sessions are from 07.45 - 09:00 (breakfast club) 09.00 to 15.00 (pre-school) and 15.00 to 18.00 (after school care).

Twenty two part-time and full time staff work with the children, 16 have early years qualifications at Level two, three and four. The setting supports one child with English as an additional language and one child with physical disabilities.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from healthy snacks whilst they are at nursery. Each day they have a variety of fruit and raw vegetables, together with brown bread and butter. Children relish the opportunity to help staff cut up the fruit and after selecting their names from a board, they sit down for their snack and enjoy socialising with their peers at the table. Children's independence is further developed as they pour drinks for themselves. Later on children gather again to eat their packed lunch together, with staff on hand to help younger children open yoghurts and peel fruit. Older children at the after school club have a similar snack to the younger children on their arrival from school and have sandwiches later on.

Children's accidents are dealt with effectively as there are a number of staff who hold first aid qualifications and a well stocked first aid box is kept accessible. Procedures are in place to record any medication given to children, with parental permission, and they do this in line with the setting's policy. Staff show affection to the children, sitting younger ones on their laps to put on shoes, hats and scarves. They are on hand to offer all children support as they come into the setting, giving cuddles and hugs as needed. Staff are generous with their praise of children's achievements and this helps boost their self-esteem.

Children benefit from being able to go out into the lovely garden in all weathers as they have an under cover area; it is used well by the children who come and go enthusiastically throughout the sessions. The outdoor area is used as an extended classroom with areas for writing, arts and crafts, construction, imaginary play, physical play, growing and exploring and is a wonderful example of how to extend classroom activities into the open air. For example, children have a builders yard that has work benches, water, chunks of breeze blocks, wooden blocks, wheelbarrows, hard hats, goggles and posters showing builders at work. This captures children's imaginations and they busy themselves banging on blocks with plastic hammers and construct items from building materials, observing the changes as they pour water onto items they have made.

Children's physical skills are developed as they manoeuvre enthusiastically around a marked out roadway in the garden, practising their pedalling skills. They use a climbing frame, slide and balancing stilts to further their skills and planned activities involving balls for throwing, batting and catching are regularly explored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children enter a bright, attractive setting that is set out to appeal to children's imaginations. Staff organise the tables with resources and children are attracted to them and are soon exploring and investigating. For example, children are fascinated by the cooked spaghetti, dyed red with food colouring, laying on a table with bowls, chopsticks, scissors and tongs just ready for children to practise cutting and serving. The premises are kept clean by staff and a daily cleaner,

with children doing their part in sweeping floors using child sized brooms and dust pans and brushes when they notice spilt sand or corn flour.

The garden is safe and secure with fencing that stops children accessing the school playing field unsupervised. It has partial grass, bedding areas, logs, safe surfaces and tarmac. Safety is important to the provider and steps have been taken to minimise any hazards. Daily checks on indoor and outdoor areas are made by staff and all toys are cleaned on a rota basis with staff vigilant about removing any items that may be broken. Fire fighting equipment is in place and regular fire drills for all the wrap around services are conducted every six weeks. This ensures children learn how to leave the premises quickly and safely.

Children confidently choose resources for themselves as most things are kept at child height. Staff are skilled at letting children take the initiative; they then move in to extend children's learning with open questions that make children think. There is a very wide range of good quality toys, child sized and adult sized furniture and resources; these are maintained in very good condition.

Children are protected from harm as staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures, knowing how to proceed if they have concerns. All staff give priority to children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children really enjoy their time at nursery. They achieve because staff are skilled and use their understanding of early years guidance such as the Birth to three matters framework to provide excellent care and education for children. Areas within the setting are defined for writing, maths, computer skills, home corner play, dressing up, water and sand play and a reading area. However, children are free to move resources to other areas if they wish and this helps to extend their learning. For example, paper and pens are supplied in the home corner that is currently transformed into a supermarket. Children busy themselves writing shopping lists and making out cheques. The area captures their imaginations selling salt dough loaves, made by the children, and lots of goods in colourful packets. Children use laminated money and credit cards to buy their goods and 'cashiers' sit at their tills ready for their customers.

When children first attend the nursery they are helped to settle because time is taken for the child to get to know their key worker. Parents are encouraged to stay with their child for the first session and then gradually leave their child for short periods of time with the key worker. Children aged from two years six months attend the setting and learn from the other children as well as staff. For example, a group of children are on a listening walk. They are asked to be quiet for one minute and listen to the sounds all around them. An egg timer is used to time one minute and some children keep their fingers on their mouths to remind themselves not to talk. After one minute the older children say what they heard - birds, an aeroplane, a whistle. The younger children repeat what the older ones say. However, on the second time of doing this exercise the younger children have the confidence to speak up first about what they heard and this includes the wind and other children's voices from the school. Staff keep meaningful observations on children's progress and note individual children's next step of development so that the planning of activities can be organised to meet their needs.

Nursery Education

The quality of nursery education is outstanding. The planning of activities is very effective and takes into account children's age and stage of development. All children are involved in the activities planned by staff who are skilled at adapting activities to meet the needs of children who are younger and children who are more able. For example, when playing number games children aged just three are asked to recognise numbers up to three, where as older and more able children will be asked to recognise numbers up to nine. All children are eager to learn, self assured in their play and confident to try out new experiences. Children's independence and self-care skills are encouraged as they help themselves to tissues to wipe their own noses and many children succeed in putting on their own outdoor coats to go in the garden. As well as their normal day to day planning staff have devised child initiated activity sheets. This is where staff join the children once they have chosen what they want to play with. Items are left out to gain their interest and staff then move in. For example, malleable play child initiated planning shows play dough, cutters, rolling pins and tools will be left on the table. Once children show an interest staff will move in and for the younger children explore rolling and making the dough expand and for older children encourage them to make sausage shapes and compare lengths.

Parents get a Birth to three matters report from staff when children have attended for about six weeks and they get a progress report on children's social and emotional development once they have been at the setting a while. At the end of their time in the nursery parents are provided with a transfer report showing the stepping stones children have achieved in the Foundation Stage of learning.

All children use marks to readily represent their ideas and older children are adept at writing letters. Children explore the sounds of letters by the clever use of a feely bag. Children are taken in groups of two or three to the quiet room where they sing a song called 'What's in the bag today'. They put their hand in the bag and pull out an item and are asked what it is, what letter it begins with and what sound the letter makes. Learning is then extended as children think of another word that begins with that letter that can be associated with the object. For example, a tiger is pulled out of the bag and the word terrible is thought of by the child to associate it. The sound of the letter is reiterated and children find this game fun.

Children's mathematical knowledge is developing well as they take part in number games and sing songs that involve counting backwards as well as forwards. Children are beginning to be confident about recognising shapes and explore this by comparing shapes to everyday items such as doors and windows. Staff put vessels into water trays for children to explore volume and put out puzzles for children to put together to help them understand pattern and shape. In the outside area children are spoilt for choice of what item to use to develop their physical skills. They have rockers, sit and ride cars and ambulances (with radios) sturdy tricycles, a climbing frame with an internal ladder leading to a large slide, areas to dig like the growing garden and the mud pie area. Their fine motor skills are also explored outside as they play with tools, recycled materials using tape and glue sticks to combine items, spades in the sand pit and pencils and chalks in the writing area.

Children are learning about living things as they observe snails and stick insects and learn about the lifecycle of butterflies. Weekly cookery sessions help children to learn about how ingredients can change texture when other things are added to them and all the children enjoy making delicious pancakes which staff cook and serve as a snack. Children grow their own flowers and vegetables in the garden and photos show them proudly holding up carrots from their crop. Children are competent users of the computer and freely access this showing competence at using the mouse and understanding the programmes.

Work in children's folders show they have taken part in creative work using string, recycled materials and paints. Children have made mini-beasts using papier-mâché with staff on hand to help them to understand what happens as the item dries. Musical instruments are used to help children to control loud and soft sounds and to tap out beats and rhythms.

Staff have a very good knowledge of the early learning goals and plan activities that help children through the stepping stones of learning in a creative and imaginative way. The challenges set for children are very good and extend children's learning. Staff are skilled at asking open questions of children to make them think and they give them time to answer in their own way.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are welcomed and play a full part in the nursery because staff value and respect their individuality. Children with learning or physical difficulties are supported by a team of staff who adapt activities to meet their needs and work with parents and outside agencies to help them develop at their own pace. Children with English as an additional language are supported as staff ask parents for key words and occasionally use picture timetables to help children to settle and understand the day to day routines of nursery life.

Excellent activities are planned to enable children to learn about the culture and beliefs of other people. For example, children are making lucky bags for Chinese New Year and read stories about these bags before embarking on the activity. The setting has a lot of resources that children access to enable them to develop a positive awareness to diversity. There is a wide range of puzzles showing people from other cultures and of different abilities including the old and infirm. Dolls depicting people from other cultures are in abundance and there are posters showing disabled people in a positive light on doors and walls. A wide range of books that show images of people from around the world line the bookcases and help children to learn about the wider world.

Children are given responsibilities within the setting. They help staff set up for snack time and occasionally help cut up the fruit. They love sweeping up the sand from the floor before lunch and at the after school club some children are selected as junior team members and are given responsibilities. Staff are consistent in their management of children's behaviour. Clear explanations are given for why children should not do something and staff get down to the child's level so they are face to face with them. Lots of praise and encouragement for positive behaviour is used by staff; if a child is showing continual misbehaviour then stories are read to all the children and occasionally things are discussed at circle time. The child is never identified and all children put in their comments about why they should not behave that way; usually the child in question learns from these discussions.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs are fostered. Children have high self-esteem, questioning staff about their discoveries and choosing activities for themselves. They show confidence within the setting as they leave their parents in the morning, greeting staff and showing enthusiasm for the activities laid out. They show wonder as they look at living things and see for themselves their lifecycles. Children learn self-care skills and responsibility, for example, sweeping up spilt sand and helping prepare snacks. Children learn to work together in large and small groups and are interested in the cultures of others.

The partnership with parents is outstanding and contributes to children's well-being. Parents are kept well informed of the events happening in the nursery through a notice board located in the foyer where the manager places copies of newsletters, important documentation, staff information and focussed activities children will be doing over the week. Parents views about their children's well-being are actively sought as parents are asked to complete questionnaires that the manager checks to make sure she is meeting every child's needs. Any concerns raised within these are quickly addressed and resolved. Parents are kept abreast of current events via newsletters and general correspondence from the manager. Parents are given verbal information about the Foundation Stage of learning and parents are encouraged to talk to their child's key worker and look at their child's development records at any time. Parents speak highly of the committed staff team and say their children are very happy and settled in the nursery

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is enhanced by the quality of the organisation. The premises are well organised both indoors and outdoors. Areas are defined in the setting for writing, maths, computer skills, home corner play, dressing up, water and sand play and a reading area. Space is used well to maximise play opportunities for children.

All the legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place. The manager reviews her policies and procedures regularly, ensuring staff are made aware of the changes. Staff are well qualified and embrace training opportunities, bringing back ideas to the setting and putting these into practice. Children benefit from being cared for by a caring, committed and experienced staff team who are committed to the continual improvement and development of the setting.

The leadership and management of the nursery is outstanding. The owner/manger is on site each day and makes herself available for parents and staff by being supernumerary to the setting. She delegates responsibilities to line managers of the wrap around care facilities whilst always being there to ensure high standards are achieved for children. She has high expectations of her staff and they do not let her down. She acknowledges they are the key strength of the setting.

The owner/manager monitors and evaluates the care and education offered to children by having regular staff meetings where planning is discussed and activities organised to ensure children are given opportunities to explore all areas of learning. Overall, the nursery meet the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two recommendations were made to improve the care for children. Since then good progress has been made and children's safety is supported as a procedure is now in place for if an allegation is made against a staff member and all records are appropriately completed by parents.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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