

Little Stars Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY219888
Inspection date	11 December 2007
Inspector	Andrea Ewer

Setting Address	Newton Bromswold and Court Memorial Hall, Rushden Road, Newton Bromswold, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0SP
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Registered person	Sally Louise Cotter
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Stars Kindergarten opened in 2001. It operates from Newton Bromswold and Court Memorial Hall in the rural village of Newton Bromswold in East Northamptonshire. A maximum of 12 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 21 children on roll, of these 12 are in receipt of nursery education funding.

Care is provided in a large hall and children share access to a secure outdoor play area. Sessions operate from 09.15 to 12.30 each weekday during term-time. Optional extended sessions, for which children bring a packed lunch are offered until 13.15. Children come from surrounding villages as well as local towns. The kindergarten supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning to speak English as an additional language.

There are two full-time members of staff, both of whom hold appropriate childcare qualifications. The kindergarten receives support from Northamptonshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and is accredited with the Pre-School Learning Alliance, Aiming for Quality scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Extremely good attention is given to ensuring children's good health is promoted well. Children benefit from nutritious snacks that contribute to their healthy growth and development. They enjoy fresh fruit and chopped vegetables with a choice of milk or water. Children help themselves to drinking water freely throughout sessions and learn about the benefits of healthy eating as staff talk to them about which foods are good for you. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure the good health of children who have special dietary needs is not compromised. Information is obtained from parents and used to ensure snacks are suitable and meet children's individual needs.

Children are developing a sound understanding of the importance of good personal hygiene. They readily wash their hands at appropriate times during the day and understand that this washes away the germs that can make you sick. Regular hygiene procedures are carried out by staff as part of everyday routines. Tables are cleaned with antibacterial cleaners before and after food is served and food debris is cleared from the floor after snacks. This effectively prevents the spread of infection. All staff hold an up to date first aid qualification and clear procedures are in place which ensure children receive appropriate care in the event of minor accidents or illness.

Children become highly confident in their own abilities as they participate in a variety of physical activities that they enjoy. They move with confidence around the nursery and negotiate space well outdoors. Children have great fun splashing about in the water tray and develop control of their bodies as they move in various ways along the mini obstacle courses. They move their bodies and clap fast or slow in response to music. This helps to develop children's large muscles and helps to improve coordination and control of their body.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a stimulating environment that is well organised to ensure their safety and well-being are promoted well at all times. Attractive displays of their artwork and photographs of children help them feel a strong sense of belonging. Rooms, furniture and equipment are organised effectively and allow children to access the extensive range of good quality resources and outdoor area independently. The creative use of the outdoor area provides an inviting space that children enjoy using. They play at being builders using the sand, buckets, spades and crates and splash about in the shallow water trays.

Thorough procedures are in place to ensure children's safety including a well-written health and safety policy. Risk assessments are carried out each day and include the outdoor area and appropriate action is taken when potential hazards are identified. Effective measures are in place to ensure children are unable to leave unsupervised and prevents unknown visitors gaining access to children because access to the premises is monitored closely by staff. Suitable safety equipment is in place to minimise any hazards and prevent accidents. Fire safety equipment is situated appropriately around the building, socket covers are fitted to all unused electric sockets and fireguards are fixed securely to all heaters. Children learn the importance of safety as they respond to clear guidelines during indoor and outdoor activities such as tidying away some toys to avoid accidents.

Staff are extremely confident in their knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and implement procedures robustly at all times if they are concerned a child may be being harmed. The written policy complies with local guidelines and confidential records are kept of any concerns staff have about children including any injuries they arrive with. As a result children are very well protected from harm or neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy their time and settle very well at the nursery. They share good relationships with staff who interact warmly with them throughout the day. All children benefit from a highly stimulating environment where they purposefully engage in activities of their choice. This positively supports children to develop their physical, emotional, social and intellectual skills. Activities for children under three years are planned around the 'Birth to three matters' framework and supports them to build on skills they already have.

Well thought out records based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework are maintained. Staff make regular observations of children and include photographs and samples of their art activities to show their progress. The next steps for each child's development is clearly identified and the information is used to plan future activities. This successfully contributes to helping children move on to the next stage in their development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making excellent progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a secure understanding of child development and implement the Foundation Stage exceptionally well using a variety of teaching methods. Children are cared for in a highly stimulating and enabling environment where staff use their time and resources very well to maximise children's play opportunities. Children are fully supported to access all areas of the curriculum through extensive, flexible planning which covers each area of learning with a variety of interesting activities and play experiences that captures their imagination. For example, children who are not keen on outdoor play are encouraged outside by setting up their favourite role play equipment outdoors. The weekly music and movement sessions are carefully planned and relate well to each area of learning.

Staff monitor children closely and records provide a clear picture of each child's progress with the next steps for their development clearly identified. Children's records are used successfully to inform planning and to plan for individual children which ensures they are all challenged to achieve their potential. This provides a secure foundation for children's future learning.

Children are extremely motivated, confident and enthusiastic learners who play purposefully with the activities provided. They play very well both independently and with their peers. They join group activities with enthusiasm such as practising for the play and feel valued as they suggest which song to sing during group time. Children make decisions confidently as they choose what to play with, whether to play inside or outside and select additional resources to develop their play and ideas. Children display high levels of involvement as they play at their chosen activity for sustained periods of time and benefit from the consistent interaction with staff who skilfully guide their play to promote learning outcomes and extend children's learning. Children are making consistently good progress in their communication, literacy and communication skills. They freely access a wide range of mark-making materials such as, pencils, crayons, paint, scissors and sticky tape where they write letters and start to understand that

writing can be used for various purposes. Children look through the telephone directory and book appointments at the building site outdoors and take messages in the role play area. Many children form the letters of their name correctly. Children speak confidently and listen carefully. They develop thinking skills during guessing games where staff give clues such as about the colour and shape and children feel the items in the box then guess which fruit it is. They enjoy listening to stories and actively participate by asking and answering questions. Children use the cosy book area frequently to look at books for enjoyment and borrow books from the kindergarten to read at home with their family. Children show an interest in numbers as labels for counting, simple calculation and gain a good understanding of shape, space and measure. They confidently count how many children are standing in the line, gain an understanding of simple calculation during number songs and rhymes and respond to questions such as 'how many more mats do we need?' Children carefully sort the buttons by colour and develop their intellectual skills as they complete puzzles. Children use shapes to create pictures such as squares for the window and rectangles for the door and use mathematical language correctly such as more than, under and through.

Children are gaining an exceptionally good understanding of the world around them. They regularly use calculators, tape recorders and battery operated equipment which helps them learn about how things work. Children learn about time, growth and change as they bring in photographs of themselves to show how they have grown. They explore and investigate natural materials including the pine cones on the interest table. Staff explain that squirrels and mice eat the outside of pine cones and leave the core. Children then become excited when they find a half eaten cone outside and tell staff that a mouse or squirrel has eaten it. Children have excellent opportunities to develop and express their creative skills. They thoroughly enjoy weekly music sessions where they use a wide range of musical instruments from around the world. Children tap out simple repeated rhythms and make some up of their own. They dance to French music, act out a Jamaican folk song and feel the vibrations of the didgeridoo then go on to talk about whether the sound is high or low.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs are fostered. Children feel highly valued in the child-centred environment where their individual needs are met very well and they are all fully included. Children feel secure because staff work extremely closely with their parents which ensures they receive consistent care. Information is obtained from parents about children's specific needs during the settling-in period and shared daily thereafter both verbally and through home/kindergarten books for all children. Although there is a clear complaints procedure in place, the system for recording complaints does not fully promote children's welfare.

Children's behaviour is excellent and of a consistently high standard. They respond extremely well to the high expectations for their behaviour as well as the highly effective strategies used by staff. Children look forward to receiving a certificate that shares good news about their behaviour with their family and start to take responsibility for their own behaviour. For example, staff tell children to put their hand up and say stop in a loud voice if another child is doing something that upsets them. This alerts staff that they may need to intervene, although often they give children time to resolve situations themselves. Children benefit from the security of familiar everyday routines in an enabling environment where they make meaningful choices and are all valued as individuals. They share and take turns as they play harmoniously and staff provide positive role models. Posters that promote being kind and sharing are displayed around

the nursery and staff remind children of the rules during planned group activities. This reinforces what is expected of children and supports them to behave well.

Children actively participate in an inspiring range of activities that helps them appreciate our similarities and differences in meaningful ways. They listen to music and taste food from other countries such as France, Australia and Jamaica. Children play with toys and join activities that positively reflect themselves and people of other races, cultures, religions and abilities. For example, children play with dolls with various skin tones and some who have a disability, dressing up clothes from other countries and books with positive images of people around the world. All children gain an understanding of disability as they participate in activities where they all walk around with their hand over one eye to experience what it is like to have impaired vision and staff use Makaton sign language which helps them to understand how hearing impaired people communicate. Children who have, or may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully supported to achieve their potential because staff implement the special educational needs code of practice confidently and are committed to actively including all children in the life of the kindergarten. They carefully monitor any concerns they have about children and work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure care is provided to support children to reach their full potential. They work together to set clear, achievable targets through individual education plans that supports children to make good progress. This contributes successfully to children developing a positive self-image and a healthy respect for others.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. Children benefit immensely from the strong partnership with parents which effectively supports children to make excellent progress. Parents receive useful information about the policies, routines and activities, which helps them to gain a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how their children learn. Information obtained from both parents and children supports staff extremely well to plan and provide activities that captures children's interest and build on skills they already have. Parents are effectively supported to become involved in their children's learning through clear and meaningful displays around the Foundation Stage and newsletters that keep them informed about the programme of learning. Records of children's achievements are shared with parents regularly and they actively contribute by sharing observations of their children from home. This supports a highly effective partnership where children's learning is central and consequently they make excellent progress towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit greatly from the effective organisation of space, resources and daily routines which supports them to initiate their own play with appropriate support from staff. All children are grouped with a key worker who knows them well and ensures their individual needs for quiet and active play are met. Children choose to play inside or outside for most of the session and staff are deployed effectively to ensure children are properly supervised at all times.

Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures ensure all staff are suitable to have regular contact with young children. Potential staff are interviewed and relevant checks are carried out, including Criminal Records Bureau and references from previous employers. Conscientious staff are highly motivated, work very well as a team and have clear roles and responsibilities. Effective systems are in place to ensure they keep up to date with any changes in policies and regular team meetings are used to plan the curriculum and discuss any issues relating to specific children. Staff continue to attend training to develop their own skills. They have recently attended

training in Visual Impairment, Safeguarding Children and Introduction to Schema which supports them to enhance the quality of care and nursery education. Comprehensive policies and procedures that underpin the practice in all areas of the nursery are implemented consistently by staff and ensure the outcomes for all children are promoted exceptionally well. Policies and procedures are regularly updated to take account of any changes. Children's records are meticulously maintained, shared with parents regularly and used effectively to support staff and parents to provide consistent care that meets children's individual needs.

The leadership and management is outstanding. Staff are extremely proactive and committed to providing high standards of care and nursery education. They embrace new information obtained through training in order to enhance their practice and subsequently the care and nursery education provided. As a result, children benefit from an enabling environment that supports and extends their learning and development at every opportunity. For example after attending training on Schema staff clearly identify children who have schematic behaviours and plan activities that enable them to access all areas of the curriculum.

The extensive use of evaluation and self-reflection is extremely successful in ensuring cohesive practice throughout the kindergarten. Staff clearly identify areas they could develop during staff meetings and appraisals and use the information to develop practice. This supports children to make excellent progress towards the early learning goals and reach their full potential.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last care inspection recommended that the kindergarten continues to develop the operational plan and share it with parents. The operational plan has been developed and shows clearly how the kindergarten promotes the outcomes for children. Staff update policies and procedures promptly in line with changes and make sure the operational plan is readily accessible to parents during all sessions. This contributes to ensuring children's welfare, care and safety are promoted.

The last nursery education inspection recommended that the kindergarten improves children's access to large play equipment, develop the quality of children's role play, develop the opportunities for children to experiment with writing for various purposes through play and improve children's access to tools and resources to make models and represent their own ideas. Children now have much better access to large play equipment where they develop their physical skills. At times large play equipment is provided inside and children have free access to outdoor play throughout sessions. This ensures children have many opportunities to develop their physical skills. The role play area has been developed and provides a wide range of resources that stimulate children's imagination and helps them make sense of the world by imitating real life. Children have free access to craft materials and small tools which enable them to represent their own ideas. The writing area is always available and writing materials are included in role play and outdoor activities. This helps children assign meaning to marks and learn that writing can be used for various purposes.

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):

- develop the procedure for recording complaints.

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