

The Children's House

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205540
Inspection date	04 March 2008
Inspector	Sarah Gilpin
Setting Address	Station Road, Stallingborough, Grimsby, North East Lincs, DN41 8AJ
Telephone number	01472 886000
E-mail	enquiries@thechildrenshouse.org.uk
Registered person	Equal Grade Limited
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 Children's House is a private nursery provision which opened in 2000. The setting is owned and managed by Equal Grade Limited and is situated in Stallingborough, a village in North East Lincolnshire. The day nursery operates from a purpose built building, with additional nursery provision and out of school care being provided in the adjacent independent school. The nursery offers childcare to the local community and surrounding areas and promotes Montessori teaching methods.

It provides full day care for up to 89 children aged from birth to under eight years. The nursery is open from Monday to Friday, and from 07.00 until 19.00 throughout the year. The out of school provision is registered to care for 32 children between 07.15 and 08.45 and 15.30 and 19.00. Staff collect and deliver children to local schools.

There are currently 148 children on register, which includes 41 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. There is provision for children with disabilities and learning difficulties and for those children who speak English as an additional language.

The provision employs 27 staff, most work directly with the children and are supported by a management team. All but three of the staff are qualified, and of these two are working towards a qualification. The provision is supported by the local authority and are members of the National Day Nurseries Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The environment where the children are cared for is extremely clean and very well maintained. The staff have an excellent understanding of the comprehensive policies and procedures, which they implement effectively to promote the health and well-being of the children. There are clear procedures for nappy changing, which include wearing aprons and gloves, cleaning areas after each change and encouraging the youngest children to wash their hands as part of this routine. Children are empowered to manage their own personal needs because staff successfully support them as they use the low level facilities. They are vigorously encouraged to gain an excellent understanding of health and hygiene because staff take every opportunity to develop the children's understanding of good hygiene through carefully planned activities and by actively encouraging the children to use tissues to blow their noses. The children know that they need to wash their hands before they sit down to eat and they are able to manage this independently with the careful support of the staff.

Children enjoy very nutritious, well balanced meals and snacks that are freshly prepared each day by the nursery cook. The excellent food hygiene standards and practices ensure that the food prepared for the children is healthy and planned to meet their individual dietary needs. The nursery have a policy of sourcing the ingredients for meals that are organic and have not been genetically modified. There are excellent systems for ensuring that children who have allergies do not come into contact with any foods that may cause an adverse reaction, which include the child's photo and a brief description of what each individual is allergic to. Children are helped to manage their own food needs through self serving their snack and lunch. This helps the children to develop their independence in this area and enables them to take responsibility, and this is a priority of the staff team, who support the younger children to achieve. Children very successfully manage their own food intake under the careful supervision of the staff. The children's mealtimes are vibrant and sociable; they thoroughly enjoy chatting to staff and friends as they eat together.

The outdoor area is used exceptionally well to extend the children's learning and to provide them with many opportunities to find out about their environment and seasonal change. Children benefit from both fresh air and exercise each day because they are able to access the outdoor area or take part in movement activities when inside. The covered section of the outdoor area is used in inclement weather to ensure that children enjoy the fresh air; in addition the area is used by staff to enable sleeping babies to benefit from fresh air as they rest. The area is set out to ensure that all areas of children's development and learning are addressed. This includes space for imaginative and creative play, as well as opportunities for them to use their gross motor skills. The children have very well developed physical skills; they enthusiastically use the outdoor area to practise and refine skills, for example, when they balance along the blocks, find ways of moving the parachute and as they chase around the space. The well planned nursery environment allows the children to move freely and with confidence between the different rooms and areas. Their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination are developing very well because staff plan a wide range of activities and experiences using tools, such as

spoons, knives, pencils and paint brushes. The older and more-able children show good early writing skills as they draw recognisable pictures and form the letters of their names.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is given the utmost priority by the staff who maintain an extremely safe and secure environment. The doors are secured by key coded pads, comprehensive risk assessments have been completed and routine daily checks ensure that children's safety is promoted. The staff are very vigilant as the children move from area to area taking care to observe them closely and ensure that the older children can safely manage the stairs on their way to play in the garden. The environment has been creatively designed to produce a vibrant child centred setting, with an exceptional amount of natural light and low windows through which the children can view the garden and the surrounding areas. There are comprehensive policies and procedures, which the staff fully understand and successfully implement to maintain the children's safety. For example, children are very closely supervised as they explore the secure outdoor areas and they are excluded from areas, such as the kitchen, which are not suitable for them. The children's arrival and departure at nursery is consistently monitored by the staff, who clearly and carefully record the information.

The variety of toys, resources and equipment, which are freely and safely accessed by the children are exceptional. Items are stored very effectively on low level shelving units and drawers, and there are many interactive displays for the children to access for themselves. All of the equipment used by the children meets the required safety standards and a systematic checking system for cleaning and maintenance ensures that items are always safe and clean for the children to use. Children display an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves and their friends safe because staff gently remind them to take care when moving around the nursery, for example, helping the children to manage the nursery stairs safely and reminding them to be safe with knives as they spread butter on their toast.

Children's welfare is safeguarded exceptionally well because training for all staff on child protection is given high priority. The staff team utilise the very clear recording systems, such as accident, incident and existing injury records, to monitor and protect the children. There is a detailed procedure for dealing with child protection concerns, which is clear and contains all of the required elements. In addition, the robust recruitment procedures help to protect the children because they are only cared for by staff who are checked to ensure they are suitable to do so.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The children's enjoyment and well-being is of high priority to all of the staff in the nursery. The adults work very hard to ensure that children are well settled and effectively cared for in a splendid environment that is exceptionally well resourced. The children arrive at the nursery and are very happy and clearly excited to engage with the activities provided for them. They are very comfortable with the staff, they seek support and clearly enjoy playing together at a wide variety of activities. Children are extremely confident in all areas of the nursery because staff are always on hand to help and support them.

The nursery operates using a Montessori approach that is matched exceptionally well to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum to ensure that children's

learning is holistic. The staff display an excellent knowledge and clear understanding of child development and this ensures that they very successfully meet the differing children's needs. Children's development and learning is observed and assessed when they enter the nursery and throughout their time in there. The staff complete assessments of the children that are focused on clear steps and stages in their learning and excellent use is made of the assessment profiles to tell a logical story of the children's progress.

The staff successfully use their extensive knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure that the planning for all children is best suited to their age and stage of development. Thought has been given to how best to provide resources that all children can use to explore their own personal experiences. Natural materials and items, such as wooden blocks, clothes pegs and soil are used for the children to explore and to help them think about how to describe their texture and form. The children are engrossed in purposeful and challenging activities and this results in them being very competent learners. There is a successful balance between adult directed activities and free choice experiences, which ensures that children can learn at their own pace and enjoy an exceptional variety of learning opportunities. The staff work in designated areas of the nursery and very careful consideration is given to the smooth transition from one area to another. Children are supported very well by the known adults as they move from the baby room to the toddler room and then on to the pre-school room. This transition is planned around the individual needs and the stage of development of the children.

The older children who attend the out of school provision have an extremely relaxed time and they have ample opportunities to make choices about what they do. They report that they have great fun in the setting and they engage with the adults and their friends in building and making activities. They take on the roles and responsibilities relating to the preparation of their snack and the clearing away of pots when they have eaten, which means they are extremely independent in this area.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The majority of the staff working with the children hold early years and Montessori qualifications, they demonstrate an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how it links to the approach of the nursery. They use this knowledge to plan a vibrant learning environment, which is full of innovative activities and experiences for the children to enjoy. All of the staff are very actively involved in the planning for children and this ensures that they can very successfully deliver the curriculum to the group they are working with. The systematic approach to the planning means that all aspects are covered over time and staff can very easily monitor the children's learning. This results in the children benefiting from a very broad and exceedingly balanced curriculum that is matched to their individual learning needs.

The children are thrilled to be involved in the activities provided for them; they are extremely inquisitive and highly motivated to learn, and they are making outstanding progress in all six areas of learning. They build extremely warm and harmonious relationships with the adults and they are forming close friendships with their peers. They are very confident and staff ensure that children can accomplish many tasks independently. For example, carefully planned snack routines maximise the opportunity the children have to respond to their own needs. All of the children thoroughly enjoy the extensive range of outdoor play activities and experiences, which include activities that promote the children's learning across the curriculum. The children are confident to speak using a comprehensive vocabulary, which is extended by the skilful interactions of the staff as they talk and question the children throughout their play. The

Montessori 'work cycle' means that children have a great deal of free choice about what they do and they follow the routines very well setting up and clearing away individual activities. Books are used very successfully to support the children's learning, through factual books accompanying displays and story books being easily accessible. The children are beginning to spell out simple words, such as hat, cup and flex, using wooden letters and prompted by the phonetic clues from their friends and the adults who are working with them.

The children play a dynamic role in their learning; they complete their 'work' using techniques that are demonstrated by the staff team. These activities are staged to ensure that children are encouraged to move on when they feel confident. The activities are inviting; when children see their friends taking part they follow on repeating the tasks for themselves. The staff are highly skilled in successfully intervening in the children's play to extend their learning and questioning techniques to help children to verbalise their understanding. When working one to one with staff, the children show great interest in the properties of items, which they float and sink in the water. They mix ingredients to create a sticky malleable substance, which they thoroughly enjoy moulding and exploring. Their awareness of number and problem solving is used when they play simple dice games and order unit blocks that help them to count into the thousands. Children count very confidently up to 10 plus and use descriptive language when talking about shapes. Their skills in resolving problems are further extended as they make models using a variety of boxes, cartons and card.

The children have a significant awareness of the environment because staff meticulously plan opportunities for them to learn about the natural world. They take part in projects about the world around them, and displays of cultural diversity help them to learn about other people. They learn about the features of living creatures by having pet fish in the setting. This learning was further enhanced when a nursery parent provided a variety of fish for them to touch, smell and observe. Children use the nursery computer with growing confidence and ease; they sit comfortably and watch their friends and take turns at completing the programs. Children thoroughly enjoy listening to music and their brush strokes are influenced by the different tempos of the music that accompanies their painting, and this type of activity is used to support their individual creativity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The children relish their time in the setting because they are cared for by staff who work extremely hard to meet their individual needs. A wealth of information is known about the children and staff work with their parents to ensure that they know about the children's needs, and their likes and dislikes before they start at the nursery. This means that the children enjoy a smooth transition into the provision, which is successfully tailored to their individual needs. There is excellent provision for children with disabilities and learning difficulties because the staff have an exceptional understanding of how to support these children and their families. Staff understand the benefits for the children when they work in close partnership with other professionals to provide them with the extra support they need to ensure they have opportunities to reach their full potential. Children and families who speak English as an additional language are effectively included into the setting. The staff seek words in German, for example, to ensure they can help children who speak the language at home when it comes to managing personal needs. Children learn about the different facets of a variety of races, cultures and religions through planned activities and learning experiences.

The nursery has a wonderful atmosphere and the children are extremely well behaved, playing harmoniously together and very clearly enjoying one another's company. They play cooperatively, they share toys and enjoy playing and 'working' as a group. Behaviour is exemplary in all areas because the children are busy and on task throughout the day. There is an excellent variety of resources and activities, which means that children can successfully make choices and take decisions about what they do and enjoy. They take an active role in the day to day routines of the nursery, which increases their confidence and self discipline. Children's self esteem is developing rapidly because they are able to take pride in their achievements. Staff take photographs of them which capture their achievements and their artwork and creations are very effectively displayed around the nursery to ensure that children and their parents can see their lovely creations. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There is an outstanding partnership with parents. The nursery is very bright, attractive and the extremely warm atmosphere helps parents to feel welcome and valued. Parents are provided with an excellent range of information about the care and the education available in the setting. Planning and curriculum information supported by photographs is displayed within easy reach, which ensures that parents can participate in their children's learning. Children and their parents are made very welcome by the staff; home-nursery books and easy going informal discussions help to ensure that the children's outstanding progress is discussed. In addition, this ensures that all information relating to the children is successfully exchanged, which results in their needs being effectively met.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The nursery is meticulously organised and exceptionally well managed and provides superb education and care, which promotes excellent outcomes for children. The routine for the day is balanced and child focused to ensure that children have a very interesting and stimulating range of experiences to engage in. The environment is very carefully resourced to promote the Montessori approach and equipped to ensure that children's safety and well-being is effectively promoted. The staff are very experienced and highly qualified, which further promotes the children's exceptional learning opportunities. The robust recruitment and vetting procedures mean that children are only cared for by adults who are suitable to do so. Staff actively participate in a nursery appraisal system and engage in an abundance of training opportunities, either in house or external, which ensure that their knowledge of education and childcare is up to date. The very comprehensive policies and procedures are successfully implemented by the staff and children's well-being is effectively promoted. These are reviewed on an annual basis, which demonstrates the nursery's commitment to improving the quality of the provision. Changes in legislation are recognised and implemented thoroughly.

The staff are very well supported by the inspirational management team, who work exceptionally hard to provide high quality care for the children. The nursery is exceedingly well managed, with effective staff deployment and high staff to child ratios mean that children are carefully monitored throughout the day. Evident roles and responsibilities for the staff team mean that they are clear about the expectations of the management team. The workforce are cohesive in approach and take an active role in promoting the excellent outcomes for children. The leadership and management of the nursery in relation to the nursery education is outstanding and effectively contributes to the consistent and rapid progress the children make in their learning. The rigorous systems for planning, evaluating and assessing the curriculum ensure that all children benefit from a broad range of experiences during their time in the setting. The managers

have a clear understanding of the strengths in the nursery, such as the high quality staff team, and strive for continual improvements in the outcomes for children.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of care the nursery was asked to improve the procedure to be followed should a child be lost. As a result, the nursery have implemented a clear policy to cover this aspect, that the staff are familiar with, and this means that children are protected. At the last inspection of nursery education, there were no areas of weakness, but the setting was asked to consider the use of the main hall for learning opportunities. As a result, this area of the setting is successfully used as part of the planning for children's learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 complaint 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

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