

# Hickory House Children's Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	127245
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 March 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Stephanie Graves
<b>Setting Address</b>	Brickfield Farm, Main Road, Longfield, Dartford, Kent, DA3 7PJ
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<b>Registered person</b>	Hickory House Children's Day Nursery Limited
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

Hickory House Children's Day Nursery opened in 2000 and operates from four rooms in a single storey building. It is situated in Longfield, Kent. A maximum of 62 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 all year round, with the exception of public holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 85 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 37 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come mainly from the local area. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 19 members of staff. Of these, 18 hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a qualification.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are actively involved in an excellent range of experiences, that consistently promote their knowledge and understanding of good health and hygiene issues. For example, they use tongs to select fruit at snack time, understand the importance of washing their hands 'to get rid of germs' and drying them properly with paper towels. They also learn about promoting personal health through meaningful role play activities. Staff follow meticulous hygiene routines, for instance, when nappy changing and cleaning toys, equipment and surfaces. This ongoing and thorough practice greatly reduces the risk of cross infection. Children benefit from the required records and procedures for medication and accidents and do not attend with contagious illnesses. This helps to prevent the spread of infectious conditions. Children's physical development and sense of wellbeing is promoted consistently. They are provided with regular opportunities to develop fine manipulative skills and also to be highly active. The growth and development of babies is very well supported, for instance, as they learn to stand, balance and walk with appropriate play equipment readily accessible to promote their developing abilities. Sleep and rest routines are considered well. Babies are checked regularly and their routines carefully recorded. This helps to promote relaxation and a sense of wellbeing.

Children flourish through a range of highly energetic activities delivered through the nursery education curriculum. They enjoy regular opportunities for outdoor play, access an excellent range of outdoor toys and resources, which they use with great confidence and ability. They thoroughly enjoy music and movement activities and 'stretching high', 'bending low', 'jumping on the spot' and wiggling their fingers and other body parts, to warm up after outdoor play. This helps to reinforce their understanding of how exercise affects their bodies. Children also enjoy moments to quietly look at a books or complete a puzzle, which helps them to relax. They have many varied opportunities to access a wide range of resources to promote their fine manipulative skills.

Children are provided with excellent meal options and have access to drinks at all times to help keep them hydrated. The cook holds a food hygiene certificate and the group have earned a healthy food award. The food provided is therefore, properly prepared, balanced and nutritious. Menus are varied, include multi-cultural options and no processed foods. Lunch time meals include a range of freshly prepared local meat, fish and pasta dishes with fresh vegetables. Snacks include a wide variety of fruit, such as bananas, apples, oranges and dried fruit and cauliflower florets. Children are involved with food preparation, for instance, as they grow their own vegetables and use them to make soup. Parents are invited to contribute to the menu, which helps to ensure the choice and variety can be based on children's favourite foods. Children's dietary requirements are respected because staff work with parents to ensure their individual needs are met.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely well cared for within a safe and secure environment. They are closely supervised and have plenty of unobstructed space to move around and play freely. Mobile and non-mobile babies are cared for within specially designated areas to maximize their safety. The excellent furniture, equipment and facilities promote children's safe development and these meet the needs of children of all ages and stages of development. Children play with toys which

are checked for safety on an ongoing basis. A clear risk assessment and action plan ensures safety measures are implemented throughout the setting, both inside and out and enables children to take part in exciting and challenging activities. This is because any risks are identified and reduced first. Staff think well ahead, complete ongoing checks within the rooms to ensure any necessary action is taken. Children's safety is considered very well through a comprehensive range of written consents from parents. Staff ensure any hazardous equipment is stored safely and safety equipment, such as a fire blanket, smoke detectors and other appliances are checked and maintained regularly.

Children are developing an exceptional awareness of how to help keep themselves and others safe. For example, they regularly practice the emergency evacuation procedure and can be heard discussing concepts during every day activities. They learn about keeping safe continuously as they follow routines and listen carefully to adult instruction. Stories also reinforce children's understanding of keeping safe and 'not talking to strangers', and build on a visit by a police officer who helped develop children's understanding of personal safety. This high level of professional input helps children develop a mature sense of responsibility for themselves and others.

Children are protected by staff who are vigilant, put their welfare first and have an up to date understanding of safeguarding issues. Training has been attended by key staff and a full range of relevant information and policies are available to staff in every room. Staff understand the signs and symptoms of abuse and confidently know what to do in the event of a concern. They are reflective in their practice and take appropriate measures to help reduce the risk of any allegations of abuse. Procedures are discussed and monitored regularly to ensure children's welfare remains the group's top priority.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children arrive at the nursery confidently and settle extremely well. They make themselves at home and receive enthusiastic support from dedicated staff who know them well and help them settle. Staff are active learners who understand the developmental needs of the babies and children. As a result, all children thrive in their care. An excellent range of activities and resources continually build on all areas of learning and development and enable children to make rapid progress. This is because the experiences provided are planned to meet children's individual learning needs and as a result, children show high levels of wellbeing and involvement. Staff make learning opportunities exciting, for instance, through providing first hand experiences, such as observing unusual creatures, including spiders, snakes and millipedes and waiting for duck eggs to hatch then watching the ducklings develop and grow in an incubator. This type of excellent input offers real meaningful experiences to children and encourages them to learn and care about living things.

Babies and the very young children are lovingly cared for by attentive staff who observe and chart their progress carefully. They are provided with an exciting variety of toys and resources which they can explore using all their senses. These include interactive toys that can be manipulated in many different ways as well as many messy play experiences. This encourages them to explore and investigate. The effectiveness of the relationships with staff are evident as babies actively seek to engage with them to communicate. This helps to develop their early social and communication skills. Children aged between two and three are provided with many learning experiences. This is because staff are highly enthusiastic about providing new and exciting challenges, which help to move children forward in their learning and development.

Children's enjoy caring for the nursery pets, which include a stick insect, fish and guinea pigs. They explore a 'forest' area made with natural resources as well as sand, gravel and shredded paper. They enjoy playing with individual treasure boxes containing different materials, lids, brushes, boxes, metals, and wood and create their own story books. These experiences help to promote creativity and curiosity. Children's achievements are beautifully displayed throughout the whole setting. These clearly demonstrate the meaningful activities taking place and reinforce a sense of pride in what children do.

## Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making rapid progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Their learning and achievements are excellent in relation to their initial starting points because staff clearly understand the Foundation Stage requirements and provide a very broad and balanced curriculum. Close links with local schools means children are very well prepared for the transition into school. Staff continually observe and assess children's learning until they leave the setting at which time a transfer document, including the next steps needed in learning are completed. Children's files show a clear progression of skills and include evidence of achievements, observations, assessments and photographs. Planning is very clearly documented and the needs and involvement of all children are included effectively. The next steps in children's learning are recorded consistently and build on what they already know and can do. These are highly effective in informing future activity plans and help to ensure learning objectives are met. Regular evaluations monitor the effectiveness of the experiences provided to ensure they fully promote children's learning potential.

Children benefit from the imaginative ways staff gain and maintain their interest during activities. This helps to keep them highly focussed as they are provided with new and exciting challenges. Children are extremely friendly, confident, play well together and are rapidly becoming independent learners. They move around the setting and independently make choices from an excellent range of experiences. They carry out tasks by themselves and are not afraid to ask for help. Children have many opportunities to learn about diversity and staff skilfully encourage children to share their home news and interests with one another, which helps develop their understanding and respect for others. Children are well behaved and readily learn about concepts relating to good behaviour. This is because staff take the time to involve them in ways that develop their understanding. For example, they are heard to ask 'what is being good?' Answers are readily given and include 'sharing,' 'being nice,' 'calm' and 'kind.' This means children have a very mature understanding between right and wrong.

Staff ask very effective questions, which help to extend children's knowledge and encourages them to think and respond with their own ideas and answers. A wide variety of tools and resources are available to encourage children to make marks and write their names or other words using correctly formed letters. They learn to identify sounds and letters, for example, as they learn that 'k' for kite sounds the same as 'c' for cat, but looks different and has a different letter name. Children learn to communicate in different languages and through signs and gestures. They become extremely involved during familiar stories and enjoy acting out storylines. For example, they confidently take on the roles of the Goldilocks and the three bears as staff creatively tell the story. Children's learning is evident as they 'knock on the cottage door' and call out 'is anybody there?' and independently re-enact the main themes again once the story is finished. This means children are able to confidently recall and sequence events without adult support.

A wide range of mathematical resources and learning experiences are challenging and readily available. Children access matching and sequencing activities. They are confident with number concepts and learn about size, shape and measure through resources and every day activities. They independently use words such as 'big' and 'little' and identify 'small, medium and large' objects through environmental images and activities. They learn to problem solve, for example, through effective staff questioning and by working out how things work for themselves. This includes competently handling freely available programmable toys. Children have many opportunities to investigate and explore, for instance, as they experiment with malleable materials or a vast range of messy play activities. They explore using resources, such as binoculars in the outdoor area and learn about living things including a small snail which 'lives in this shell.' They also explain how worms 'wiggle' in their hands in the garden. They have regular opportunities to explore music and sound in a range of situations. For instance, loud music is played as they gather together and carry out 'team work,' to competently tidy the toys and resources away. This promotes creativity and fun in every day routines and helps to get tasks completed.

Children demonstrate excellent hand-eye co-ordination, for instance, as they use scissors and other one handed tools and click and drag the mouse when using the computer. Daily use of the outdoor area, in all weathers, greatly promotes children's physical skills. They can confidently climb, balance and negotiate space on ride on toys. Children are very creative and become engrossed in music and movement activities, including pass the parcel. They thoroughly enjoy opportunities to play with malleable materials and explore texture, shape and form in different dimensions. Role play opportunities include a garden centre where children use watering cans to water the plants and 'make this one grow tall.' They place the plants on a window ledge because they know the sun will help them to grow. The use of real resources, including plants and a watering can, promotes children's ability to recreate real life experiences through purposeful play.

Overall, the provision plans and provides an outstanding range of experiences and play opportunities, which develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities exceptionally well.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are warmly welcomed into a bright, welcoming environment by very motivated staff who care for them according to their individual needs. Babies and the younger children are continually acknowledged and affirmed, enabling them to feel secure and develop a strong sense of belonging. Children have many experiences to learn about the similarities and differences between themselves and others. For example, toys and resources include positive images of diversity, children learn and use words from different languages and environmental images and displays reinforce their understanding and achievements. Children's contributions are actively sought and valued, for instance, as they help to prepare and create exciting learning resources for the outdoor area, take part in fund raising events and learn about concepts, such as recycling. This enables them to develop an understanding about how to protect the environment. Children are exceptionally polite and respectful towards staff and one another, because behaviour management strategies involve them and promote positive behaviour. For instance, children collect marbles in containers for good behaviour and once this is full they know they have a treat to look forward to, such as having a picnic in the outdoor area. These measures promote children's welfare and encourage their ongoing involvement in the behaviour strategies used.

Children benefit from consistency of care through a committed partnership with parents. A full and comprehensive range of information is shared and parents are encouraged to visit the setting to speak with their child's key worker at any time. They are provided with opportunities to give feedback about the service provided and to contribute towards key concepts, such as policy making and children's menus. They also help with fund raising events and take part in special events. These include sports day and a recent 'take dad to nursery day,' which involved fathers and grandfathers. The excellent key worker system enables parents and children to develop trusting, close relationships with key staff, which enhance children's progress and emotional wellbeing. Parents believe their children receive the best care possible and they feel completely included and involved. The provider ensures that parents are kept very well informed through a substantial set of policies and procedures. This results in continuous support for children between home and the nursery environment.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents of children receiving funding for nursery education receive a wide variety of information and have regular opportunities to share their children's individual progress records. They are actively encouraged to take part in all aspects of nursery life. Curriculum plans are clearly displayed and key staff offer daily feedback to parents, as they arrive to collect their children. Parents know they are welcome to visit the nursery to share their special interests and skills with the children. They greatly value the opportunities provided and feel their children are making excellent progress. The working partnership with parents reinforces children's enjoyment of teaching and learning concepts.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They become very excited and involved with the activities and experiences provided and have ongoing opportunities to discuss their home news and interests. They celebrate special occasions, including their birthdays where children receive a lot of individual attention. Children are very sociable and exceptionally well behaved. They communicate effectively together and can independently share and take turns. Overall, children are engaged in many purposeful experiences, which enable them to learn, progress and enjoy nursery life.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care and learning is significantly promoted through an exceptionally well organised environment. They demonstrate close relationships with key staff and have free access to a wide range of play and learning experiences. Very effective systems are in place to ensure the adults working with children are suitable and staff training needs are continually addressed. High staffing ratios provide children with ongoing, consistent support. The key worker system is based on ensuring children have a special person for them to go to within the nursery and the staff team work closely to meet their needs. The registration certificate is displayed clearly and the necessary records are all in place and shared with parents. These include daily attendance records for children, which show clear arrival and departure times. The excellent range of policies and procedures underpin the group's systematic, professional practice and help to ensure that children's welfare, care and learning are consistently promoted.

The leadership and management is outstanding. Clear aims and objectives ensure children's learning potential is promoted very well. The provider is totally committed to providing high quality care and education for all the children attending. The provision of toys, resources and experiences is excellent and children are progressing rapidly as a result of the learning opportunities provided. The effectiveness of the planning, teaching and learning, children's progress records and the overall success of the curriculum are continually monitored and

evaluated. This helps to ensure highly effective teaching methods and learning experiences are based on children's individual and collective needs. Staff implement the Foundation Stage requirements professionally and maintain close links with local schools, to help with transitions. Regular training updates enable staff to confidently deliver high quality education for all the children attending.

Excellent leadership and management skills along with an enthusiastic staff team contributes towards the continuing improvement of the provision. This is clearly evident in ongoing self-evaluation exercises, continual reflective practice and the group working towards accreditation. Consequently, children flourish through exceptional staff input and exciting opportunities to play and learn. The nursery provides a professional service. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the provider received three recommendations. These included ensuring that accident and medication records are kept confidentially, that the temperature in the baby room is adequate and comfortable and to ensure there is sufficient accessible and safe storage of toys and resources. The recommendations have been fully addressed. Accident and medication records are maintained confidentially within each room, the temperature in the baby room is maintained appropriately and children's toys and resources are stored effectively. Further plans are currently under way to provide more permanent storage space in the future.

At the last inspection of nursery education, three key issues were raised. These included improving the use of resources to promote children's role-play, developing effective questioning to expand children's inquisitiveness and understanding, in particular in the area of Mathematical development and to encourage children's independence at meal times. The key issues have all been addressed. Children can freely access a wide variety of meaningful role play resources, staff use questioning skilfully in a range of situations to promote learning and children's independence is encouraged at every opportunity.

The provider has taken considerable steps towards improving the service and ensuring children can play and learn within a safe, secure and stimulating environment.

### **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.

## **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 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)