

Footsteps Childcare Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY355990
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Inspector	Julie Wright
Setting Address	The Old Sunday School, Well Street, Tywardreath, Par, Cornwall, PL24 2QH
Telephone number	01726 816 911
E-mail	
Registered person	Kelly Louise Russell
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Footsteps Childcare Centre is a privately owned day care provision. It opened in 2007 and operates from a converted Sunday School building. It is situated in the village of Tywardreath, near to Par, in Cornwall. All children share access to a secure enclosed play area. Children attend from the local area and by arrangement can be taken to and from Tywardreath school.

A maximum of 42 children may attend the nursery at any one time. Care is available to children aged from three months to 11 years. At present there are 108 children on roll, 30 of whom are in receipt of funding for nursery education. The nursery is open each weekday, from 07:30 until 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year.

The nursery employs 10 staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from advisory staff in the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the physical play opportunities in the setting. The main room is equipped with a 'Jungle Gym', which provides for indoor physical activity. Children enjoy using this equipment and have fun as they climb, slide and follow the course. The outdoor play area is accessed from the main room and staff encourage 'free flow' play. This gives older children the choice of outdoor and indoor play during the sessions. Babies benefit from fresh air when they are taken for walks in their pushchairs. This occurs when there are sufficient staff to supervise the outing. The older children use the outdoor play area frequently, however, this limits the routine opportunities for babies to be taken outside. Staff are currently applying for funding in order to develop the outdoor play area. They are also planning to introduce 'Wake Up and Shake Up' sessions. Children enjoy physical exercise and become aware of the impact on their bodies. For example, they talk about heartbeats and becoming hot.

Suitable policies are in place to promote the welfare of children, for example, in health and hygiene. Most procedures are implemented appropriately, although there are inconsistencies in practice. For instance, older children wash their hands at routine times, such as before eating. However, the babies have individual flannels after but not before meals, which is not consistently hygienic. Nappy changing procedures are in place to help minimise the risk of cross infection. Staff have a rota system and use aprons, disposable gloves and mat sprays when changing children. The baby room is equipped with a changing table, however, staff place the mat on the floor in the toilet area for the older children. Babies have individual sheets for the cots, which is hygienic and reduces the risk of infection. Records of accident and medication details are maintained in order and all staff have a current first aid qualification. This promotes the safety and welfare of children.

Children's individual dietary requirements are known and met by staff. Breakfast and snacks are provided and include healthy options. For example, children have cereals, toast, savouries, fresh fruits and salad. Parents provide packed lunches for older children, or containers with baby food for the children under two years. Staff discuss weaning with parents and record what the babies have eaten. They heat food using a microwave, although the hygiene and safety procedures are not stringent. For example, some staff blow on food and do not have clear awareness of food safety, such as suitable procedures to ensure safe temperatures. Children enjoy sociable, café style snack times, sitting in small groups and chatting. They have some opportunities to help staff with simple tasks and to develop independent skills. For example, they take turns to be a 'special helper' and can help to pour their drinks. However, the jugs are too big and heavy for some of the children to benefit from the experience. Children sometimes spread butter onto crackers and slice bananas, although this is not consistent practise. Staff use picture and number cards as a prompt to learning at snack time, for example, the number two reflects the two portions of apple on the table.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in two groups, one for babies aged from three months to two years and the other for children aged two to four years. The rooms are warm and welcoming and provide a safe, stimulating environment. School children integrate with nursery children in the main room and outdoor play area. They also have access to a small room equipped with electronic

games. Resources are suitably organised and well prepared for children as they arrive. Children are welcomed by staff and they immediately choose an activity. Procedures to maintain the premises, toys and equipment are in place and generally well implemented. However, later in the day the condition of the toilets is not always conscientiously checked. Some of the outdoor play equipment remains outside and is not quite as well maintained as the toys which have storage. The nursery has a secure entry system which promotes safety for children.

Children become aware of safety during planned topics. For example, staff borrow 'road safety' resources from the local authority. Children learn about traffic lights, road signs and safe crossing places. There is a suitable evacuation plan and children take part in fire drills. However, these are not frequent enough to ensure that children become familiar with the procedure. Written risk assessments are in place and staff undertake routine visual safety checks.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff have a satisfactory understanding of the procedures to protect them. Staff attend relevant training to ensure that their knowledge and information is up to date. Parents are informed of the safeguarding policies and the responsibilities for children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children form warm relationships with staff and each other. Staff plan a suitable programme of activities in line with the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, children are not always set age-appropriate challenges for their age and stage of development. For example, learning is not consistently extended for more able children. In the baby room staff are beginning to plan activities which link to the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Babies enjoy a reasonable variety of toys and show interest in their surroundings. Staff tend to sit them at a low table for prescribed activities, which limits some exploratory and spontaneous play. For example, they are given a paint pot, brush and piece of paper, or a simple inset jigsaw. Staff plan to include 'shapes' as a topic, which is too structured and advanced for babies. They have recently begun to make observations on the younger children and have support from the local authority to develop their planning. Babies are mostly content and feel secure in their room. Staff are familiar with their routines, such as sleeping patterns, and meet their general care needs. Ratios are maintained, although at times individual needs are not securely met. For example, when each of the staff simultaneously tend to a baby, the others may not receive individual attention. Babies recognise familiar adults, smiling and responding to staff interactions.

In the main room children make independent choices in their activities during free play. They respond well to staff instructions and willingly join in. For instance, they quickly form a group for circle time, or sit together for a singing session. Children play imaginatively together and particularly enjoy the role play area. Physical play is popular and at times the children become quite boisterous. The noise level sometimes has a general impact on the atmosphere, and for children engaged in more structured activity. School aged children enjoy outdoor play, table games and electronic games. They are happy in the setting and approach staff with confidence. Staff work generally well together and share the responsibilities for children. For example, they have daily rotas for tasks and provide suitable cover for staff breaks. However, their work routines do not fully support the children's needs, such as when staff change over when feeding babies. The rota for nappy changing does not effectively limit the number of carers for younger children. Staff model actions for children in play, for example, in the baby room they stack bricks and say 'fall over' as they tumble. Babies smile and begin to copy the actions seen.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff provide a balance of structured activities and free play for children. These include opportunities to benefit from individual attention, and also to take part in small and large group activities. In some activities staff prompt children's thinking and learning, asking relevant questions. However, learning is not consistently promoted, for example, in free play it is often incidental. Children respond well to staff and show interest during the sessions. They develop concentration and a sense of achievement as they complete activities. Planning includes a weekly phonic sound, a number and various activities which link to the current topic.

Children develop social skills and positive relationships in the nursery. They play well together and approach staff with confidence. Children listen carefully at story times and take turns to speak during circle time. They begin to link letters to sounds and also recognise familiar letters, such as in their names. Children have access to a range of writing materials in structured activities and free play. For example, they independently make writing patterns with sticks in the dry sand. They enjoy painting at the easels and drawing on paper with crayons at a table. Children begin to understand that print has meaning and see signs, pictures and labels around the setting. However, some of these are too high for the children to fully benefit from. For example, the calendar used at registration time and some words displayed in the role play area.

Children hear and use numbers in songs, action rhymes and stories. They play computer games which prompt some mathematical development. Comparisons are made in measurements during activities, such as when they are constructing tracks, or building towers. However, staff do not consistently promote opportunities to calculate, or solve simple problems in everyday situations.

Children benefit from a wide variety of activities which develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. They show interest in nature as they examine insects, grow plants and become aware of life cycles. Staff plan interesting experiences for children, such as having a visitor from the zoo. Children look at photographs of large animals and examine snake skin and shells. They see living creatures, for example, snails, millipedes and worms, and make a photographic display of their own pets. Children concentrate carefully as they use the computer, showing understanding of how the mouse and cursor work. They take part in activities during the year which develop awareness of diversity. For instance, they learn about different homes, places and lifestyles.

Children have frequent play opportunities which promote their physical skills and development. They have a suitable variety of resources for indoor and outdoor play. Children show a sense of space and develop coordination as they play. For example, staff chalk a track for children to manoeuvre around on their wheeled toys. Children use tools and equipment which promote their fine motor skills, for instance, they snip and cut with scissors.

Children enjoy the role play area which is resourced to link with a current topic. For example, they imagine they are 'Vets', looking after and making their pretend animals better. Resources include natural materials, such as straw and hay for bedding, which promotes children's interest. They play well together and show a good understanding of the purpose of the role play area. Music is predominantly used as background sound, which children do not often acknowledge. They do respond positively to the organised singing sessions, recognising familiar songs and enjoying action rhymes. Children explore a variety of play materials in their creative play opportunities.

Overall, children make sound progress towards the early learning goals, given their capability and starting points.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual needs are discussed with parents and appropriate records made. Staff are aware of children's dietary and health requirements. They implement a suitable equal opportunities policy and promote inclusion. For example, they seek key words in a first language for children who have English as an additional language. Staff are introducing simple signing with children for everyday words and actions. There are clear procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Children are generally cooperative and respond well to staff. They are familiar with the daily routines and most understand the rules and expectations of behaviour. Staff put appropriate limits on the use of electronic games, television and the large play equipment. Occasionally some of the children return to the gym area when it is 'closed'. Staff are consistent in their approach and ensure that children comply with the simple rules. However, at times this impacts on an activity which staff are distracted from in order to respond to a situation. Children develop self-esteem and are proud to receive a sticker in recognition of an achievement. They show a sense of responsibility as they help to clear their plates and put away their lunch boxes. Staff use positive language during activities as they praise and encourage children in their play. Children's social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development is fostered in the setting.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff promote positive working relationships and have clear communication systems with parents. They provide a daily diary for the younger children, with details of activities and routines. A detailed policy and procedure handbook is available, accessible on the notice board. Newsletters inform parents of children's activities and forthcoming events. Parents are notified of the current topic, such as 'Living Things' and are invited to take part in an activity. This helps to involve parents in children's learning, although further opportunities are limited. Parents are aware that staff make observations on the children and that they can see these records at any time. However, they do not have opportunities to contribute to on-going records of assessment. Staff provide an annual questionnaire in order to seek parents' views on the provision. At inspection parents provided positive feedback on the quality of care in the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff informally monitor and evaluate their provision of care and education. They have discussions on self-evaluation and are beginning to develop more rigorous procedures. These are in early stages and not yet thorough to ensure that all aspects of learning are effectively promoted. There are sufficient staff and ratios are maintained, however, the organisation and deployment of staff is not always fully effective. The key worker system gives staff specific responsibilities for the children. Most of these relate to record keeping and not to the secure promotion of consistent care, particularly for the younger children. For example, the staffing arrangements do not always minimise the number of carers for individuals.

Robust vetting and recruitment procedures are in place to ensure that children are cared for by suitable persons. The majority of records and documentation are maintained in order, which

contributes to the health, safety and welfare of children. The registration procedure includes attendance details for staff and children, although these are not clearly differentiated. Staff demonstrate a commitment to developing their practice and attend relevant training courses. They have suitable action plans in place and are working towards the implementation of the new regulatory framework.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- improve the registration procedure to clearly indicate the numbers of staff and their attendance details
- promote consistent hygiene practice at all times and ensure food safety when using the microwave
- improve the key worker system and the organisation and deployment of staff, to ensure that children's individual needs are consistently met and to effectively promote their learning and development

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop a systematic procedure to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision, to ensure that the activity programmes are age-appropriate and suitably challenging (also applies to care)

- improve the opportunities for parents to be involved in children's learning and to contribute to the ongoing records of development and assessment (also applies to care).

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