

TreeTops Private Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY316231
Inspection date	11 July 2008
Inspector	Veronica Sharpe / Caroline Wright
Setting Address	4, Marlborough Road, Colmworth Business Park, Eaton Socon, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 8YH
Telephone number	01480 476817
E-mail	
Registered person	Treetops Nurseries 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

TreeTops Day Nursery was first opened in November 2005 and is registered to accept no more than 93 children aged under five years, of whom no more than 33 may be aged under two years. The nursery is purpose built and accommodates children on two floors. There is an enclosed outdoor play area. It is located on a business park in Eaton Socon, St Neots, Cambridgeshire.

Opening times are 07:30 to 18:00 Monday to Friday all year round, with the exception of some public holidays. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 137 children on roll, 25 of whom are receiving funded nursery education. The nursery supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are 16 staff who work directly with the children, over half of these have appropriate early years qualifications, two members of staff are currently working towards a qualification. The nursery is part of a national chain and holds Investors in People accreditation.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy freshly cooked nutritious meals, such as risotto or pasta dishes. Food is served in adequate portions and children can have further helpings until their hunger is satisfied. Children have opportunities to socialise at meal times as they sit down together with staff. The nursery cook is well informed about children's dietary needs and ensures food is safe and suitable. Babies who eat nursery meals have their food served by their key workers so it is chopped or mashed according to their individual needs and stage of development.

Suitable systems are in place to record any accidents or incidents and staff attend training regularly to update their knowledge of first aid. Generally hygiene in most areas of the nursery is adequate; rooms are mainly clean and well kept with regular routines for cleaning. However, tables in the dining hall are not always wiped between meals and floors are not kept free of food debris. Children frequently access the toilets and washbasins in bare feet, then enter the dining room for meals or return to their group rooms. This puts them at risk of cross-infections.

Babies and younger children benefit from an active lifestyle, they have space to move around and can play in the nursery garden daily. Babies, for example, move around their room freely and have suitable furniture and equipment to encourage them to begin to crawl and pull themselves up. Sleep times for babies are flexible so they can enjoy the same routines as at home, which helps them to feel settled and content. Older children follow the nursery routines, but have sufficient time to rest and relax.

Children use the outdoor play areas in all kinds of weather where they learn to move with control and co-ordination, riding bikes and balancing on the railway sleepers. They use balls and hoops to throw and catch with a degree of skill. They are able to climb and move over, under and through appropriate apparatus. Planned activities, such as 'Monkeynastix' enable some of the children to extend their physical skills with support from a qualified adult. They use a range of small equipment and tools, such as knives and forks but have limited opportunities to use, for example, scissors or cutters. They pick up small items, such as feathers, sequins and bark chippings, demonstrating good co-ordination, but lack of support from key workers means they do not always use these resources appropriately. Children fasten buttons and put on their own shoes, developing appropriate self-care skills when they use dressing-up clothes. They comment that they are 'tired' or 'cold' as appropriate. However, children are unable to visit the lavatory on their own or get themselves a drink or snack when they need it. This affects their ability to learn how their bodies work.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm and inviting environment. Rooms are cheerful and decorated with examples of children's work, photographs and posters. The entrance hall is organised efficiently so parents and other visitors see notices of interest, such as menus and newsletters. Generally rooms offer sufficient space for children to play safely and move around freely. Equipment and furniture is safe and suitable for children to use, and in most areas there are sufficient accessible resources for children to begin to make their own decisions about their play. For example, in the baby room there are treasure baskets with a range of natural materials to stimulate babies' interest.

The setting entrance is safe and secure, with coded locks to prevent unauthorised access, however on the day of inspection outer gates to the garden had been left unlocked. This is a risk to children's safety as there is nothing in place to prevent access or egress. Although the risk assessments identify this as a potential hazard, daily checks have not been conducted, which means some parts of the risk assessment are ineffective and therefore compromise children's safety.

Children practise the emergency evacuation procedure on a regular basis so they know how to respond in a fire. A log of drills is kept so any potential concerns can be addressed. Fire prevention equipment is serviced annually and alarms are tested in order to keep children safe. There are suitable procedures in place to enable children to go for walks, or take a bus ride into town safely.

Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures, some have attended the full designated person training so they can activate the safeguarding procedures in the absence of the manager. Documentation relating to child protection is kept accessible and shared with parents and carers, which helps to promote children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Younger children benefit from a range of age appropriate activities planned using the 'Birth to three matters' framework. The youngest children enjoy a calm and relaxed environment, staff sit with them on the floor and make sure children are engaged and happy. Comfortable seating, bouncy chairs and soft play ensure babies relax and play confidently. Adults are attentive and kind, they offer laps to sit on and lots of cuddles, as a result babies and younger children are settled and content. Children enjoy spontaneous games with adults, such as playing peep-bo, or singing nursery rhymes, this develops their relationships and builds trust. When in the creative rooms children enjoy a good range of messy activities, such as having fun with water, or making hand prints with paint. Interesting resources, such as a new ball pool excite children's interest so they are keen to join in and have fun.

Activities are planned using the 'Birth to three matters' framework and staff work together to ensure younger children enjoy a good variety of activities and resources. Key workers know the children well and speak knowledgeably about their likes and dislikes, which enables them to plan activities that children enjoy. Routines of the day, such as tidying away and preparing for lunch sometimes limit their opportunities to spend time in activities that interest them. In addition, because children have to share some of the facilities, such as the creative areas they are sometimes unable to concentrate and sustain their play until they have finished, instead they are moved on to the next room because other children have to take their turn.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Children are often merely occupied rather than being questioned and challenged by their key workers and activities fail to build on their existing knowledge and skills. There are limited opportunities for them to ask questions or talk about their work because most of the adults working with them lack appropriate knowledge and skills to carry out their role and do not understand the Foundation Stage. As a result, opportunities to question children and to encourage them to find out more are missed. Staff do not prepare play areas before children access them and insufficient resources are provided

outdoors until half way through the session because inexperienced staff do not recognise that children learn through their play in the outdoor environments.

Staff make regular observations of children at play and use these observations to monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals. They plan a range of activities linked to topics, using the stepping stones to identify learning outcomes. However, the activities set out on a day-to-day basis do not always accurately reflect the planning documents, particularly in the outdoor area. As a result, staff do not know how the activities contribute to children's learning and miss opportunities to help children to develop their ideas and extend their thinking. Key workers are not effective in using their observations of what children enjoy and do well to plan activities on a day-to-day basis. As a result, activities lack interest and challenge for individual children; instead plans relate to the whole group and do not build on what children know and do well. Consequently, children become bored during the session, moving around looking for activities that will interest them and sometimes display challenging behaviour, particularly outdoors.

Staff do not pay adequate attention to details. As a result, they fail to provide appropriate resources to enable children to develop early reading and writing skills independently. For example, the graphics area is very untidy, making the resources difficult for children to find, and pencils are not sharpened; the blackboard outside has no chalk for children to use and when children ask for mark making materials outside they are refused access. Children are not able to independently access paper in the creative area and there are no mark making resources in the role play area to enable them to practise early writing skills in their play. The library area in the communal hall is neglected by staff and there is a lack of comfortable seating; books in the classroom are not attractively displayed or easy for children to access. As a result, children do not use books independently, limiting their ability to develop early reading skills in an informal way. Adults fail to approach the programme in a consistent way and challenges are missed. For example, they write children's names on their art work without asking children to attempt to do this for themselves and children do not learn to read familiar words such as their own name, through daily routines and activities. Although staff follow a programme for the teaching of phonics using the letter of the day and games such as 'sounds lotto', children are not encouraged to develop their listening skills in every day routines so that they can learn to differentiate sounds in words in the future. This compromises learning.

Children explore aspects of mathematics as they play. They sort stars and moons into groups when they play in the shaving foam and break bread sticks into 'long and shorter' pieces at snack time. They experiment with patterns, putting trains in a long line or making circles with the construction toy. They use the language of mathematics to talk about 'lots of toes' and 'more raisins.' However, staff fail to use conversations to challenge children or to make them think. They do not use opportunities for children to extend their learning through daily routines, such as preparing their own snack, counting how many children at registration or calculating how many blue pieces of construction toy are used to build the castle for the Power Rangers. In addition, poor preparation of activities hinders children's learning, for example, staff take so long to bring pouring and measuring resources to the water tray that children have used up all the water and instead throw the buckets and funnels around the garden.

Children can be self-motivated and have some opportunities to explore interesting materials. For example, they spend a long time investigating the shaving foam or mud in the outside area, rubbing it in their hair or making 'mud packs' for their face. They wash the fence with water using flannels and brushes and notice that the boat floats on the water. They use a range of media to design and express their ideas in art and craft in the creative room. Staff plan some

interesting activities, such as hunting for mini beasts in the garden, providing children with magnifying glasses to help them to see the details of the creatures more easily. They follow up these activities by making ladybirds with spots to display in the classroom. Children enjoy dressing up and role play. They play in the pop up tents outside and use materials available to improvise in the absence of props. Children have some opportunities to complete simple programmes on the computer using the mouse to draw their own pictures. However, adults fail to provide children with the essential resources and support so that children can develop their imaginations, stories and narratives effectively.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not fostered. Staff in the pre-school rooms do not provide children with adequate opportunities to make decisions about their day-to-day lives, such as when they will eat snack, visit the lavatory or play outside, and do not provide enough activities that meet children's interests. For example, key workers erect barriers to prevent children from coming indoors and refuse access to resources because 'its not time yet'. Staff fail to provide an environment that promotes positive behaviour and inexperienced staff's ability to manage older children's behaviour is poor, as a result children's behaviour hinders their learning. Staff's lack of attention to detail impacts on children's motivation and behaviour, for example, they tie the fastening tapes of protective aprons together in a knot to hang them up with. When children are asked to put an apron on before they play in the water they become frustrated because they cannot put the apron on without help.

However, children sing songs to themselves as they play and move their bodies to songs, which they sing at circle time with their key workers. They talk about personal events that hold significance for them, discussing 'a princess cake for my birthday' or a visit to 'Duxford with my dad.' They learn about other lifestyles and cultures through playing with resources that reflect diversity, such as dual language books and through the celebration of a range of cultural and religious festivals. They bring in photographs of their holidays to display in the entrance area and this helps them to learn about each other's home cultures and traditions. There is a suitable system to support children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as those who speak English as an additional language. Individual progress is monitored and advice is sought from specialists, which enables children with additional needs to become involved in the life of the setting. Parents and carers of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities speak positively about support given to their children.

Children benefit from positive relationships between parents and staff. Various systems, such as daily sheets and verbal feedback ensure parents are reasonably well informed about day-to-day issues and routines, although they say do not always receive enough information about their children's activities. Clear notices in the entrance foyer and the group rooms mean parents can read about future changes and events, so they know what to expect. Comprehensive policies and procedures are available so parents and carers are clear about the expectations and this helps promote children's sense of security.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. They have satisfactory information about their children's achievements, with twice yearly reports and parents' evenings to keep them up to date with children's progress. They have an opportunity to make comments on reports so that they contribute to children's learning. However, these comments are not used effectively to plan future activities that meet individual

children's needs. Parents receive satisfactory information about the nursery education in the prospectus and regular newsletters.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Robust recruitment procedures promote children's welfare; appropriate checks are taken up on anyone working with the children and this helps to ensure they are safe and suitable. New staff benefit from a buddy system that enables them to understand the setting policies and procedures, and generally these are implemented adequately. Systems are in place to make sure all staff attend essential training, such as first aid and child protection, enabling staff to respond confidently in the event of accidents or if there are concerns about children's welfare.

Children play in an environment that is mainly organised suitably to meet their needs, for example, babies have sufficient space to move around freely. Toddlers and younger children benefit from an adequate range of age appropriate resources and equipment so they enjoy their time in the nursery. However, the routines of the day that require children to move around according to a time-table and restrict access to creative play limits their chances to sustain their play and therefore extend their learning. Children play in the outdoor area for a good proportion of their day for fresh air and exercise, although resources in the outdoor area are not always sufficient to enable them to make choices and develop their interests. The senior management team have begun to evaluate the quality of the care provided and continue to develop new initiatives in order to improve the outcomes for children, although these have not yet had time to impact positively all areas of the nursery. Overall children's needs are met.

The leadership and management of nursery education is inadequate. The management team have not yet developed a suitable system to monitor practice in the Foundation Stage and suitably qualified staff are not deployed in this area. Although the new manager of the Foundation Stage is well qualified and has implemented many positive changes these have not yet secured adequate improvement since the last inspection. The demands of additional management responsibilities means that the Foundation Stage leader is not always working in the classroom and on these occasions, early education is entrusted to people who lack appropriate knowledge or experience. As a result, planning is not followed or implemented; basic resources are not provided and staff working with funded children do not know their role in helping children to learn. This affects the quality of teaching and consequently, children's progress is seriously compromised.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of early education the setting agreed to improve opportunities for children to choose their own activities and direct their own learning; improve staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and to continue to develop systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of care and education.

Since the last inspection the setting has made some improvement in the way children choose their own activities. For example, they access clearly labelled resources in the classroom from the range on offer in low level shelving. The classroom has undergone some changes to make it easier for children to direct their own learning, such as through clear zoning of areas so that they know where they can find construction toys or role play equipment. However, children are not encouraged to access resources independently in the creative room and they are unable to freely access their preferred learning environment during the session. Many of the staff

working with funded children are unqualified and inexperienced. They do not understand how young children learn and although plans are in place to develop their skills they have received insufficient training in the Foundation Stage to help them to carry out their role effectively. Whilst the area manager visits the nursery regularly and the nursery manager observes staff working with the children as part of her role, this system has proven ineffective in securing improvement since the last inspection. As a result, poor practice has gone unchecked and teaching is inadequate. This seriously compromises children's learning.

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to ensure children are provided with suitable utensils at meal times. Children eat their meals and snacks using appropriate knives, forks, plates and cups, this enables them to develop good eating habits and help them to understand appropriate good manners.

Complaints since the last inspection

On the 15 November 2007 concerns were raised relating to National Standard 1: Suitable person, and 2: Organisation. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit on the 16 November 2007 and found that the provider was not meeting National Standard 6: Safety and 14: Documentation. The registered provider was therefore set with two actions to assess the risks to children in relation to exposed electrical plug sockets and temporary electrical heaters and take action to minimise these, and ensure that accurate records are kept of the names of the children looked after on the premises; their hours of attendance and the names of the persons who looked after them. Ofsted received appropriate responses to these actions and the registered provider remains qualified for registration.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

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):

- continue to develop hygiene routines to minimise the risk of cross-infections
- develop risk assessments so they identify and evaluate hazards both indoors and out and identify who will carry out the necessary actions
- increase children's opportunities to make independent decisions and sustain their play
- improve information given to parents about the activities provided for their children.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- make sure that staff working with funded children provide adequate resources, both indoors and out, ask challenging questions and engage in conversations with children, extending their learning across all areas of the Foundation Stage
- make sure that activities offer appropriate challenge and interest, meet children's individual learning needs and promote positive behaviour
- make sure that all staff working with funded children are able to carry out their role effectively: ensure they have adequate knowledge of how young children learn and the Foundation Stage Curriculum
- set up an effective system to monitor and evaluate the provision for funded early education.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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