

Little Clowns Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY300167
Inspection date	09 May 2008
Inspector	Timothy Butcher
Setting Address	10 Queens Road, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 7TH
Telephone number	01275 340069
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Registered person	Little Clowns Nursery Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Clowns Day Nursery is one of two nurseries run by a limited company. It opened in 1990 and operates from two levels of a large Victorian house in Clevedon, North Somerset. There is a fully enclosed area for outdoor play for older children. The baby unit operates from a separate annexe in the grounds and has its own outside area that has an all weather surface.

The nursery provides full day care for up to 48 children from families living in the local area. The group is open each weekday for 51 weeks of the year from 08.00 to 17.30, or to 18.00 by special arrangement. Children can attend for up to 10 sessions each week.

There are currently 71 children on roll. Of these, 28 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

There are fifteen staff work directly with children. Of these nine of the staff hold an appropriate early years qualification to level three, two staff hold an appropriate early years qualification to level two and one member of staff is working towards a level two qualification. The setting

receives support from the local authority. It is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about the importance of good hygiene and go in one and twos to wash their hands before eating. Children develop their independence in personal hygiene and self-care skills. They are suitably encouraged to follow routines themselves and those newly learning these skills are provided with good support and supervision. Children fetch paper tissues for themselves to dry their noses. They are prompted to try to dress themselves before going outside to play and receive ample support to be successful with this. They spontaneously try to put on aprons before messy play and are confident enough to ask for help if they need it.

Children enjoy healthy options of fresh vegetables or fruit at snack time. Mealtimes are very social occasions for children as they sit in friendship groups. They happily chatter with staff and with each other about what they have been doing. Natural opportunities are used by the staff to discuss healthy eating options with children at the table. Children learn about food and nutrition as they sometimes help prepare some of the vegetables with the staff. Water is offered throughout the day and children are able to help themselves from the jug and cups made available. Young babies have their bottles suitably fed to them with plenty of warmth, cuddles and close contact. Toddlers begin to develop the skills to feed themselves as they are shown how to hold the spoon and receive plenty of praise and encouragement for their efforts.

Children have their health safeguarded because there are clear policies and procedures for dealing with accidents, incidents and the administration of medication. Information is shared with parents on each occasion at the point of collection and they are asked to sign in acknowledgement that the information has been shared.

Children have regular opportunities for physical exercise and this promotes a healthy life-style. Children have frequent access to the outside play space. A group of three year olds sit in a circle to enthusiastically sing action rhymes and games. They take turns to become 'jumping beans' and each child jumps very energetically, keeping to the beat provided by the clapping of others. They use up lots of energy and clearly thoroughly enjoy the outside experience. Documentary evidence shows children enjoy such things as 'teddy parachute play', water and sand play. Babies and toddlers have their own enclosed outside play area. They develop their coordination skills and muscle control as they explore the castle slide and climbing frame under the watchful eye of staff who closely support children to move and to grow in confidence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the thoughtful use of space throughout the premises. The premises are made welcoming, attractive and is a stimulating environment for children. Rooms are appropriately laid out for their purpose and staff provide good quality resources that are often creatively presented. This effectively supports children to exercise choice as they have easy access to the good range of resources on offer. The rooms are made attractive with examples of the projects that children have undertaken displayed on the walls. The role play area has recently been refurbished and now provides a realistic home setting with life-like plants,

furniture, appliances and equipment. The babies unit in particular provides a bright, stimulating and safe place for babies to play and they explore in comfort. Their outside area has a soft all-weather surface with a good range of equipment to meet their needs and they clearly enjoy the experiences.

Children have a safe environment in which to play. The provider has carried out a comprehensive and thorough risk assessment of the premises and has effective control measures in place to reduce the risk of accidental injury to children. The premises are secure and access is closely monitored. Children do not enter areas unsupervised as staff are vigilant in ensuring that gates are closed. The transfer of children both upstairs and outside is closely supervised. Children learn to follow some basic safety rules. They line up to leave the main playroom and know to create suitable space by stretching an arm to the shoulder of the child in front. They carefully negotiate the stairs and make good use of the handrails that are positioned to be of a comfortable height for them.

Children have their welfare safeguarded because staff have a sound understanding of the possible signs and symptoms of potential abuse. There are clear policies and procedures in place to support staff and to guide them should they have a concern about a child. However, the procedure where an allegation is made against a member of staff does not include sufficient detail within the policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff in both units use their good knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage respectively to promote and support children's learning. Babies and children make good progress in all areas of their development. Within the baby unit children are well cared for and have plenty of attention as routines follow their individual needs. They thrive in an environment that provides a broad range of stimulating activities. For example, babies crawl into and out of the shredded paper pool and develop their large muscle and coordination skills as they do so. Under the watchful eye of a member of staff they sit inside the ring to explore the texture of the paper with their hands and watch with wonder as it moves, rustles and floats as it falls. A young baby sits safely in an activity ring to watch other youngsters. She has a range of toys to reach for and to grasp and happily explores the shapes with her hands and mouth. Toddlers explore the musical instruments and laugh and listen to the sounds they make. They explore paint and mark-make through a range of simple creative activities, such as a butterfly collage.

Preschool children and children over two years mix freely together for free-play activities. They get on well together and generally benefit from the shared experiences. Older children are seen helping younger children for example, in a chosen activity an older child helps a younger one free a toy car stuck in the garage. They follow similar activities for some periods of the day but split into smaller groups such as at registration time and also for some adult-led activities such as story time. Children grow in confidence in speaking to the group at registration time and those less confident are skilfully helped to contribute.

Nursery Education.

The quality of learning and teaching is good. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. The setting as a whole is moving towards a more child-initiated learning approach. Children have good attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic and fully involved in a wide

range of developmentally appropriate activities that capture their imaginations and fire their interest. Staff effectively support children's play and learning as they know children well. Key workers have a good understanding of their children's abilities. Children benefit from the size of the setting and effective communication contributes to the planning process. There are clear routines and children have the opportunity to express choice and to take some part in planning their play. Staff note what is of interest to children and respond to their ideas; and some of this information is then used when planning future activities.

Staff have begun to use open ended questions more frequently. As a result children talk about what is familiar to them, make sense of the world around them and are well supported to make the links between new experiences and what they already know. Children's learning is monitored through reference to each child's learning profile, where well written observations and photo-documentary evidence of what children can do is routinely recorded. The system for the planning of activities is currently under review as staff have found it only partially successful when considering children's next steps in development. As a result children's individual learning needs are not always fully met.

Children are confident in the setting and are developing good relationships with each other and with staff. They have many opportunities to learn about taking turns, for example, two children happily take turns to thread beads onto dragon headed laces. They throw a dice to choose the coloured beads and count and name the different shapes. They help each other to find the right one. Children have regular opportunities to use the computer. They take turns to complete some simple counting programmes and develop their mouse control and hand to eye coordination as they do so.

Children use mathematic skills in everyday activities, for example, they weigh out ingredients on the scales when making dough figures and take turns to mix the ingredients with a spoon. They listen to and follow instructions and use positional language when rolling out the dough and placing the figures on the baking tray. They are encouraged by staff to count cars and bricks during child initiated play. In more structured and adult-led activities staff use questions to prompt counting, naming and explanation.

Children have good opportunities to make marks in a range of activities throughout their day. They have paper and pens in the home corner. They draw, stencil, colour and follow shapes and contours in table top activities. The writing area has a variety of materials that children are able to access freely. They practise pencil control through colouring activities. Some are helped to write their name on the pictures they have made.

Children thoroughly enjoy the opportunities to handle and to look at books. The 'book week' proved very popular and staff have used the information about what is of interest to children to plan further activities, such as the painting activity using Mr. Men shapes. Children are also encouraged to discuss and make facial expressions to show the range of Mr. Men emotions. Pictures of them doing so are on display. Children engage their imaginations and listen carefully at story time and show good levels of concentration. They are drawn into the story, aided by the lively delivery. They learn that print has meaning through looking at the book held up and they help to turn the pages. They are sometimes asked to predict the story or to put themselves in the shoes of characters, such as how the rabbit feels. They excitedly finish off the end of sentences as the member of staff skilfully encourages them to do so and enthusiastically take part in an action rhyme.

Staff sensitively develop children's language as they gently repeat back sentences using corrected words in conversations with children. They introduce new words and give space for children to express themselves, such as at story time.

Children explore design and make large and small models using construction sets and other materials. For example, a child concentrates for a good amount of time as she makes a very long tower and connects up all the shapes. Children show interest in a suitable range of creative activities that stimulate their interests. There are a number of creative activities planned with different materials each day that children are able to freely access. They thoroughly explore paints with hands, fingers and arms. They use marbles, brushes and wheeled toys to create pictures and collages in a range of mediums. They develop their knowledge and understanding of the world through a number of planned and spontaneous activities such as through the use of binoculars. They grow plants such as sunflowers. Children make good sense of the world around them because staff often use the natural opportunities to build on what children know to extend their thinking.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children strongly benefit from the good exchange of information. Parent and carers report positively about the setting, in particular, the approachability of its staff and the range of activities provided for children. They are closely consulted and their consent is fully sought such as in regard to emergency medical treatment and to outings. There is a regular newsletter that informs parents about forthcoming topics and activities. Clear information about the setting is made readily available. Parents are warmly welcomed. Staff know children and their families well. The key-worker system and parents evenings ensure that parents are kept informed about their child's progress although this has not yet been extended to include discussions with them about future learning goals. Visual displays that provide good information about what children have achieved is 'work in progress' in both the baby unit and the main building.

Children are highly valued; their choices are respected by a caring staff team that are committed to developing a child focused environment. Planned activities such as the celebration of Ede and Diwali, successfully introduce children to the wider world and to different cultures. Children also learn about diversity through the positive images they encounter when using a range of multi-cultural resources including dressing up materials, home corner equipment, toys, puzzles, small world figures and books. Children have good opportunities to learn about their own culture and the locality through some strong links with the local community.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities have their specific needs appropriately met. Children with individual education or other plans are well supported by staff who work very constructively to carry through specific plans. Staff consult with other professionals in order to fully support children's progress. All children are helped to join in activities and are encouraged to express their individuality.

Staff have a positive and inclusive approach to the management of behaviour. Children are learning right from wrong because staff provide clear and consistent boundaries and are themselves good role models. Children are treated with respect. They are strongly helped to feel good about themselves through positive praise. Children get on well with each other and are very social. They show care and consideration for each other and work very cooperatively together such as at tidy-up time they are seen to work very hard and effectively to clear away

all of the resources in the role play corner. They are happy, settled, and quickly become involved in self-chosen activities, leaving little time for undesirable behaviour. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced by good organisation in both the baby unit and the main nursery. Time, space and resources are used well to offer children a wide variety of experiences, in a child-friendly and well-organised environment. Children benefit from generous staff ratios that allow staff to respond to the individual needs of children. There is a clear system in place for the recruitment of new staff and for checking the suitability of all staff in line with current legislation. The stable staff team know children and their families well and this enhances the care of children as staff use this information to make meaningful links for children throughout children's play.

The staff team work well together to ensure children have suitable routines. Children are grouped appropriately; at story time and registration time as they are split into smaller groups so that all children are able to contribute. Free-flow and more structured activities are well planned to provide rich experiences for children.

Documentation, policies and procedures are used effectively to promote the welfare, care and learning of children. All legally required documentation is in place and is regularly reviewed. The policies in regard to child protection and complaints procedure lack some specific detail and the provider has been swift to address these.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. An overview is held and there is a sound awareness of the main strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The whole nursery is moving towards a new system of tracking and planning for children's learning and development. The system of planning has yet to be consolidated. As a result children's learning is not always maximised when planning for children's immediate next steps in development. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement as demonstrated through the training courses undertaken by staff. The nursery works with an advisor from the local authority to develop their good practice. The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was agreed that improvements would be made to the grouping of children in line with their ages and stages of development. It was further agreed that staff's understanding of the Foundation Stage would be extended to ensure that children were provided with suitable challenge.

Since the last inspection staff have undertaken training in regard to the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage. They have received support from the local authority and have developed the way they now plan for both the Foundation Stage and the Birth to three matters framework. They have made suitable improvements. They have changed the way children are grouped and have developed systems to track and plan for children's progress. As a result children are now provided with suitable challenge across each area of learning and the grouping of children provides them with opportunities to participate at a level more closely aligned with their stages of development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted mainly in relation to National Standard 6 - Safety. Ofsted visited the provider to discuss the concerns raised and from the subsequent investigation, an action was set under National Standard 6 - Safety. They were asked to undertake a further risk assessment of all potentially hazardous activities.

The provider responded to Ofsted to confirm that suitable measures had been taken. Ofsted was satisfied that by taking these steps the provider met the National Standards and remained qualified for registration at the time the investigation was closed.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- review child protection procedure to include the circumstances under which the regulator would be contacted, such as where an allegation is made against a member of staff
- make improvements as indicated in the nursery education section below
- review the complaints procedure to include specific timescales in which investigations are to be completed

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 systems of planning further that are based on children's interest and that maintain a focus on what they need to learn next so that their next steps in development are clearly planned for.

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