

Overdale Tots

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY362775
Inspection date	07 May 2008
Inspector	Kelly Eyre
Setting Address	Putnoe Lower School, Overdale, BEDFORD, MK41 8EN
Telephone number	01234 401 818
E-mail	overdale.tots@ntlworld.com
Registered person	Teaching Tots 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 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?

Overdale Tots is run by Teaching Tots Ltd. It opened in 1994 and was re-registered in September 2007. It operates from a classroom within Putnoe Lower School in Bedford. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open each weekday during term-time and sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45 and 12:30 to 15:00, with the option of a lunch club each day. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 32 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area, which includes the surrounding villages. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is able to support children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs seven members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's growth and development are very well promoted because they are offered healthy and nutritious snacks. Menus are displayed and these demonstrate that children are consistently offered a balanced range of healthy options such as fresh fruit or vegetables daily. Children's independence is promoted as they take turns to help prepare the snacks. They show their obvious enjoyment of this as they willingly help, carefully consulting the menu to see what is needed and selecting and preparing the required items. Snack times are viewed as learning opportunities and children learn valuable social skills as they sit in small groups, help themselves to drinks and snacks and help tidy up after themselves. Children are gaining a very good awareness of healthy eating practices as they regularly discuss this subject and have covered relevant topic work. Children's individual dietary needs are accurately recorded and there is a thorough system for checking dietary requirements and allergies, ensuring that children's health is protected at all times.

Children thrive because there are highly appropriate daily procedures and practices which promote their needs. The setting's comprehensive staff induction procedure and ongoing training ensure that staff have an excellent knowledge of this area. Their daily support and guidance enable children to gain a thorough understanding of the relevance of good hygiene and health practices. For example, children are able to explain the importance of wearing sun hats, drinking plenty of water and taking regular exercise. Excellent record-keeping ensures that children's health needs are accurately recorded and can be consistently met. This area is further supported by comprehensive policies providing guidance on issues such as childhood illnesses and the exclusion of children who are unwell, further minimising the spread of infection. The setting is able to respond to accidents appropriately and without delay as the majority of staff have current first aid qualifications.

Children's physical development is very well promoted because they are offered an extensive range of activities and have daily opportunities for fresh air. For example, they enjoy using the outdoor play area where they climb, slide, crawl through tunnels, balance on beams and ride-on toys and play parachute games. These activities provide opportunities for children to explore, develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and co-ordination. The development of finer manipulative skills and hand-eye co-ordination are encouraged through children's participation in a wide range of activities. For example, they manipulate construction pieces, hold pencils correctly and utilise a wide range of tools when involved in crafts and playing with dough.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is given a very high priority. Staff have an excellent understanding of this area and take positive steps to prevent accidents and to plan for emergencies. Comprehensive policies and procedures are put into practice on a daily basis by all staff. The practical use of thorough risk assessments and the regular review of these further ensure that children's safety is promoted at all times and they are able to move freely and safely around the setting. Children are gaining an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They describe clearly the relevance of safety procedures such as why it is important to take turns on play equipment.

They also engage in role play to further promote their understanding. For example, children use traffic lights and explain when it is safe to cross the road.

The constant attention paid by staff to all details ensures that children are cared for in a highly stimulating and welcoming setting. There are colourful displays of their work, helping them to feel welcome and valued. Children have access to an extensive range of play resources and equipment. These are very well organised and easily accessible, enabling children to choose what to play with or find inspiration to extend their activities. For example, children come inside to help themselves to additional cars to put down the plastic chute in the outdoor play area.

Children's welfare is promoted to a high standard because all staff have attended additional training and have an excellent understanding of the principles of safeguarding children. They have made sure that they are able to record and report concerns without delay. This is further supported by comprehensive policies, a wealth of additional guidance and robust procedures to ensure the recruitment and employment of suitable staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children show great enjoyment of their time at the setting. They are exceptionally happy and secure, confidently separating from their parents and carers at the start of the sessions and eagerly exploring the activities and play resources. They have excellent relationships with each other and with staff, confidently organising their play, participating in discussions and initiating conversations. Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor play areas and their play is enhanced by skilled staff who consistently offer highly appropriate support whilst allowing children time to develop their own ideas. For example, a small group of children observe the African Land Snails and are then joined by a staff member who encourages them to discuss the conditions required for the snails to survive and introduces the concept of 'hibernation', explaining this and encouraging children to use the reference books and display cards to gain more information.

Children's independent learning is nurtured in all areas of this vibrant setting and they demonstrate high levels of independence as they make choices about their activities and play. Their natural curiosity is positively promoted and the sensitive support provided by skilled staff ensures that children feel confident to explore their environment and to experiment. For example, children explore a large construction set before a staff member suggests following the instructions: children study these, choose the correct pieces and explore the concept of joining pieces with nuts and bolts, experimenting until they find the most effective method. They show great pride in their finished 'truck', pushing this around the room and showing it to other children and staff members.

The meticulous attention to detail in planning and assessment means that children's individual development is consistently promoted. Staff have an excellent understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, using this to inform all assessments and planning for younger children, thereby promoting their balanced development in all areas. Children's development is further promoted because each child has an individual play plan, which assesses their current stage, plans activities to promote the next stages and then evaluates these in order to review and plan further activities.

Children's learning is consistently extended because staff make excellent use of every incidental learning opportunity. For example, when choosing plant pots for gardening, children are

encouraged to look at the spider's webs on these, discussing where they came from and making up a rhyme to describe this. Their learning is gently reinforced through the thoughtful linking of activities. For example, children participate in an activity to experiment with mixing paint colours and later listen to a story about colour-mixing, where they eagerly predict the outcomes of the story, displaying their new knowledge of colour-mixing.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children have an excellent attitude to learning and are making outstanding progress towards the early learning goals. They are very well prepared for school and the environment within the setting promotes their confidence so that they are able to respond positively to new challenges and confidently negotiate this transition. Their overall development is consistently promoted throughout their time at the setting because staff have an excellent knowledge of the Foundation Stage, using this in all activity planning and assessments. The flexible, child-centred approach to planning ensures that children are able to learn at their own pace but there are practical systems in place to ensure that their progress is well-balanced across all areas of learning.

The pre-school offers excellent opportunities for children to develop the attitudes and behaviours that enable them to achieve in their learning. For example, children show high levels of independence as they competently choose their activities throughout the sessions, asking for help or additional resources whenever needed. The diligent attention paid by staff and the creative provision of a range of stimulating resources ensure that children's natural inquisitiveness is encouraged. For example, children examine the 'Mini-Beasts' display, exploring the model creatures, looking through the books and then taking the torches to help them look for mini-beasts in the outdoor play area.

Children interact exceptionally well with others, listening carefully and competently using language to explain their thoughts, ideas and activities. They fully understand that print carries meaning, showing a great interest in stories and books, joining in with group stories, using books as reference resources and choosing books to read independently. They confidently use writing for a range of purposes and understand that it can be used as a form of communication. They write their names on their work and write lists and notes during role play. Children use numbers in a meaningful context and understand that numbers represent sets of objects. They show an excellent awareness of mathematical concepts and are able to develop their problem-solving skills to help them resolve daily problems. For example, children playing with water, work out why certain containers are not water-tight, experimenting with blocking the holes and then deciding that the best method for carrying the largest volume of water is a completely water-tight container.

The thoughtful attention paid to planning and to the set-up of all play areas means that children have daily opportunities to observe, explore, question and be curious in an extensive range of activities that form the foundation of their later learning in subjects such as history, geography, science and technology. Children are positively encouraged to explore their environment, are self-assured and are confident to play independently and with others. They investigate objects and explore the process of growing, for example, by growing their own flowers and fruit and noting the conditions required for healthy growth. Children are extremely confident in the use of information and communication technology equipment, using a range of resources such as cameras, calculators and tape recorders. They work competently at the computer, using the mouse and following instructions to select items and complete the programme correctly.

Children enjoy an extensive range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills. For example, they participate in structured sessions such as action rhymes, dancing and parachute games. They show an excellent understanding and a positive attitude towards physical exercise and healthy lifestyles, discussing concepts such as healthy eating, the importance of exercise and good hygiene practices. Children enjoy numerous creative opportunities to explore colour, texture, shape and form. Examples of this include junk modelling, making collages, construction and modelling with clay. They enjoy regular opportunities to explore music and learn how sounds can be changed. For example, they have made their own musical instruments using natural materials and have experimented with water-filled jars to note how the sound changes according to the level of the water.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff's sensitive interaction and their excellent understanding of the principles of equal opportunities ensure that children's individuality is highly valued and they are consistently offered a wealth of opportunities. Children make choices about their play and activities throughout the sessions and are always offered appropriate support from skilled, caring staff, ensuring that they are able to participate meaningfully. Children are respected and play an active role in the setting. Their ideas and requests are taken seriously by staff who adapt activities and daily routines to accommodate these. For example, children request bubbles to play with outside and staff adapt the planning to accommodate this extra activity.

Children are gaining an excellent understanding of right and wrong and their behaviour is exceptionally good as they confidently choose their activities and share play resources and equipment. They show a genuine appreciation of each other's company, for example, offering each other praise and encouragement during activities. Behaviour management is supported by a practical policy which is implemented daily and ensures a consistent approach. Staff are skilled in managing children's behaviour and always offer them clear and realistic explanations so that they are able to understand their behaviour and take responsibility for this. Staff act as excellent role models, demonstrating a calm, polite and attentive approach to both children and adults. Children mirror this behaviour in their daily play and interactions, promoting a calm yet busy environment.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They participate in a creative range of play opportunities and activities which promote their understanding of our diverse society. They have regular access to a wide variety of toys and play resources which give positive images and information about other cultures and ways of life. Children are gaining a true understanding of differences and other cultures, for example, through their participation in a creative range of activities associated with a diverse range of celebrations. They gained an understanding of Diwali through story-telling, listening to traditional music, dancing, making lamps and lanterns and tasting a variety of traditional dishes. They are developing an excellent appreciation of their local community through the regular use of local facilities such as shops, walks and the use of the school playing field and nature area.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs clearly identified and met. Comprehensive assessment methods and highly appropriate individual plans ensure that they are always supported in reaching their full potential. Staff are experienced and have attended a range of additional training. They are therefore able to work sensitively and consistently with children, parents and other professionals to ensure that appropriate care is always offered. This is further supported by a wealth of additional information for staff to refer

to. An excellent understanding of inclusion, high staff ratios and excellent teaching methods all contribute to ensuring that children are well supported and are able to participate in all activities and daily routines.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are offered comprehensive information about the setting, ensuring that they are fully aware of policies, procedures and daily practice. They are therefore able to feel confident in the setting's ability to provide appropriate care for their child. Parents' notice boards, leaflets and information files provide a wealth of information on a wide range of topics, including detailed information about the Foundation Stage, clearly showing how this links with children's play and development. Parents are kept very well informed of their children's activities and progress through newsletters, daily discussions with staff, updated notice boards and regular meetings with their child's key worker. Parents' views are actively sought through the use of questionnaires and a suggestions box. Feedback and ideas are taken positively, for example, staff are investigating the possible extension of the setting's services to include holiday care.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Overall, children's needs are met. They benefit from the care provided by well-supported, dedicated staff. Their daily experiences of the setting are significantly enhanced by the exceptional quality of organisation and the thoughtful attention paid to all details relating to their development and well-being. Children's ongoing welfare and safety are promoted through the setting's comprehensive policies and procedures, which fully support and enhance their excellent childcare practice. A comprehensive staff induction programme ensures that all staff are aware of the setting's procedures and are able to work appropriately with children at all times.

The excellent organisation of space within the setting helps to ensure that children are offered an extensive range of activities and their varying needs can be consistently met. The considerate organisation of the play areas and resources means that children are able to move safely and independently from one area to another, confidently initiating their own play and learning. For example, children choose to play outside in the play house or tending the seeds and plants they are growing, and then move indoors to use the computer or choose books.

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The owner and play leader demonstrate a great commitment to ensuring that all children are consistently offered the highest levels of care and education. The setting's capacity to improve is very strong and all staff continuously strive to improve their practice. They have an excellent attitude to self-evaluation, producing practical action plans that are used as working documents in achieving changes. This attitude leads to changes that positively affect outcomes for children. For example, a recent change to enable children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor play areas throughout the sessions has meant that children are offered an increased range of activities and play opportunities.

The setting's excellent commitment to ongoing staff training ensures that staff feel valued, are up-to-date with current practice and are therefore able to provide appropriate care for all children. The owner and play leader act as excellent role models, showing their genuine enjoyment of their work and passing on their enthusiasm for their work with children. This creates a positive environment in which children can feel confident and are motivated to play and learn.

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 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