

The Children's House

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY349641
Inspection date	22 May 2008
Inspector	Susan Victoria May

Setting Address	59 Prince of Wales Avenue, READING, RG30 2UJ
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Telephone number	0118 959 1371
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Registered person	Little Tots Nurseries Ltd
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Full day care
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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?

The Children's House Montessori, under the umbrella of Little Tots Nurseries Ltd reopened in 2007. It is a private nursery school which follows the Montessori ethos. The nursery is situated in the West of Reading. The nursery meets the needs of families in the local community and the intake of children reflects the diversity in the area. The nursery provision is set in the ground floor of a 1920's house and has an enclosed garden. The provision is registered for 44 children between the ages of two and five years. There are currently 69 children on roll, of whom 41 are funded three and four year olds. The provision supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. The provision is open from 8.00 to 18.00 each weekday for 48 weeks per year. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are 11 staff who work with the children, over half of whom hold recognised early years qualifications. There are also four visiting teachers who take the children for cookery, gardening and music sessions.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The Montessori ethos of the nursery positively promotes and encourages independence in children, helping them develop their personal skills and awareness of personal hygiene. There are good facilities and procedures for nappy changing and older children are confident in using the bathroom unaided. Clear diagrams and photographs strategically placed help remind children of what they need to do, for example, flush the toilet before hand washing. Staff follow effective procedures to protect the health of children in their care, such as, washing hands after changing nappies and before preparing food. To protect children in the event of minor accidents several staff hold first aid qualifications and first aid boxes are easily accessible. To ensure parents are fully aware of events and incidents in their child's day, staff accurately record accidents and there are clear procedures for the administration of prescribed medication. Procedures for the administration of non-prescribed medication are less robust. Parents countersign all completed documentation.

Children explore, test and develop physical skills through daily experiences. Staff's clear understanding of each stage of development means the youngest children are confident to try out new skills, ask for help when needed and set their own limits within the safe environment. The outdoor area is well thought out to provide children with many opportunities to develop physical skills as they participate enthusiastically in free play and take part confidently in events and games, which they clearly enjoy. Children are confident in their physical abilities and run, jump, balance, kick and throw balls with ease. Children have further opportunities to develop their physical skills through lively movement sessions indoors. For example, during the jungle song, where they jump around chattering like monkeys and slither like snakes. Opportunities to increase control and co-ordination are available daily to the children through a variety of self selected activities, for instance, as they transfer rice from one container to another and complete puzzles.

To protect children all details of dietary requirements are discussed with parents, recorded and all staff made aware. Parents provide children's lunch and tea and are requested to bring in a piece of fruit each day that can be shared amongst the group. Staff store lunch boxes safely to ensure food remains fresh. Staff offer milk or water to children at snack time and children have access to water throughout the day. Children help prepare the fruit snacks and a 'rolling' snack time means they can choose when they wish to eat. Snacks and meal times are social occasions where children sit together and chat, this helps promote good future eating habits.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The entrance area to the nursery displays children's artwork and useful information, welcoming parents and children into the bright, clean and well maintained environment. The premises are secure and only staff answer the door to allow all visitors and parents to gain entry. This ensures children's safety within the nursery. Procedures, such as fire evacuation practices, regularly take place to ensure prompt evacuation in the event of an emergency. Staff complete risk assessments for outings, however, the absence of a clear daily risk assessment procedure on the premises compromises children's safety as possible hazards are not promptly identified. Children are learning about keeping themselves safe through reminders and discussion with staff, for instance, asking the children to remember that they do not run inside.

Children feel a sense of belonging as they use individually named child height coat pegs and put their work into named drawers. A wide range of natural play materials compliments children's learning, such as water, rice and an excellent selection of wooden resources. Staff check the toys and equipment to ensure they are suitable and safe for children to use. Staff prepare the rooms prior to the arrival of children with a range of toys and resources. Children develop their independence by choosing the toys and resources they wish to use from the range set out, or by selecting toys from the low shelving and storage units. Staff ensure the toys and resources are in good repair and appropriate to the ages and stages of the children attending by sorting and cleaning the toys regularly. The daily routine allows children to enjoy a range of active, quiet, indoor and outdoor activities.

Staff have a sound understanding of child protection procedures and symptoms of child abuse. Staff discuss and record existing injuries with parents who countersign completed paperwork. This ensures the safety and welfare of children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive at the nursery happy and eager to participate in activities that provide good levels of challenge and promote children's development. Staff greet the children and take an interest in their lives. For instance, staff ask the children questions about what they do when away from the nursery, this gives children a sense of self-importance and helps develop language, thinking and communication skills. Children gain confidence as staff praise their efforts, encourage them to achieve and provide activities which are stimulating and fun. Children are encouraged to initiate their own learning and are given adequate time to explore the range of equipment and resources easily accessible to them. Staff sit with the children, appropriately encouraging their participation. Staff set the nursery rooms out attractively with activities to encourage the children to use. Staff form caring and warm relationships with children which helps them to develop a strong sense of self. Children develop independence as they select and carry out activities from the very good range of resources around the rooms. Children benefit from the consistency in the daily routines. They know to put away the individual activities when completed and help staff to tidy up before moving into a different part of the session.

It is evident that staff have a very good understanding of each child's needs and regard for early childhood curriculum such as Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage. For example, throughout the day as sessions change, the children are split into groups so that younger children listen to short stories appropriate to their age, while older children listen to more complex stories developing their concentration skills. All children enjoy and join in with songs and action rhymes. Staff provide sensitive support, ask effective questions to help move learning forward and anticipate children's needs. All children are involved in a broad range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and learning. For example, water play, using the computer, building with construction equipment, painting on the easel and accessing the natural world as they watch the tadpoles develop into frogs.

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and children's individual levels of learning, which helps children to achieve their full potential. Staff track and record observations to accurately document children's progress and achievements and use this evidence to help move all children's learning forward. Children have access to a

wide range of interesting, stimulating and fun activities, resources and equipment, increasing their skills and development in all areas of learning.

Children are making very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They clearly enjoy and show interest in the activities and demonstrate increasing independence as they change their shoes and put on jumpers to go outdoors. Children are confident and articulate speakers and are beginning to use complex sentences and initiate conversation with their peers and with adults. There are many opportunities for children to recognise their own names, from coat pegs to lunch time place mats. Older children are beginning to identify the names of other children. The use of labelling and simple sentences on displays provides further opportunities for children to see the written word in every day use. Children have the opportunity to mark make relevant to their play. For example, two children make a shopping list and discuss where they will buy the items they have listed. The range of books to which the children have access is good and they can choose to sit and look at them independently or together in the comfortable reading room. To further develop their word recognition skills children access sand letter shapes, have object boxes and simple books to identify words. These are shared with parents who take them home and comment on children's progress.

Children show an interest in numbers and counting, and use number names and number language spontaneously. They enjoy joining in with number rhymes and are beginning to complete simple addition and subtraction. The children freely access equipment that provides direct and indirect preparation for maths development. For example, the systematic approach of the Montessori materials ensures that children are familiar with math concepts, as they sort, match, count and sequence. Staff ask questions which encourage the children to think and to introduce them to new words and concepts such as 'full' and 'empty' as they pour sand into different containers.

Children enjoy a range of media to explore their creativity, use tools with increasing skill and participate eagerly in a range of songs from a growing repertoire. The well organised indoor area ensures children have exciting opportunities and good access to a range of meaningful resources to develop their own ideas and activities across the six areas of learning. The outdoors area includes some opportunities to extend children's learning across the curriculum but primarily to develop children's physical skills.

Children are becoming confident in using information technology equipment. They eagerly complete simple self-rewarding programmes on the computer. They learn about and take part in celebrating festivals from their own and other cultures, such as their birthdays, Chinese New Year and Pancake Day. Children use their senses to explore and participate in activities, experience different media such as sand, dough and water and see changes and images in cookery and art and crafts. Children handle small tools and equipment safely and with increasing control. For example, paintbrushes, scissors, cutlery, pens and the computer mouse. Visiting teachers for music, cooking and gardening provide additional support.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff know the children well and treat all children with equal concern. They give high priority to building children's self-esteem and confidence in order to begin to equip them with the skills required in later life. Most children enter the setting happily and leave their main carer with ease. Staff are aware of and offer support to those children who require assistance in entering the nursery, for example, a child sat with a staff member for a short time on arrival before moving off to choose an activity. The children have access to a varied range of

age-appropriate toys and resources which they are able to self-select, develop their independence and promote free choice. Through topics, role play situations, small world toys and visits from members of the local community such as the dentist and community police officer, children are learning about themselves and the environment. Their knowledge and understanding of the wider world is developing well. They engage in topics which help increase their understanding, for example all the children made a 'Flat Stanley', a character from a story, and as in the story sent him on visits around the country and the world. Using photographs and labelling and a large map they talked about where he had been and what he saw in each place he visited. Children have access to resources such as books, puzzles and role play equipment which promote positive images of diversity. Staff are sensitive to the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. They are effective in assessing individual needs and successfully adapt activities to offer suitable levels of challenge without identifying children. Staff work effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure the child's needs are met.

Children are lively, responsive to requests and behave well. Staff have high expectations and consistent boundaries for the children, which helps them to learn negotiation skills. Their behaviour is promoted through meaningful praise and positive role modelling by staff. For example, staff speak to children as they wish to be spoken to and children respond appropriately. This fosters a sense of value and self worth. Staff and older children support younger children in sharing and turn taking. Staff demonstrate a positive approach to help increase children's understanding of right and wrong and children respond well to gentle reminders to care for each other, resources and the environment. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. A strong partnership with parents contributes significantly to children's learning in the nursery. Staff actively seek parents' involvement in the setting and with the children's learning, for example, a book reading scheme is in operation. Staff provide parents with good information about the Foundation Stage. This helps staff and parents work together to help children make progress. The positive relationship reinforces children's sense of belonging and ensures their confidence in the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting is effectively organised and provides children with many opportunities to make decisions for themselves. Children are clearly happy and feel comfortable in this environment. Staff are kept informed of any changes to policy through regular staff meetings and demonstrate a good understanding of the setting's policies and their responsibilities to ensure the well-being of children. Staff ensure children are never left unsupervised with persons not vetted, that ratios are maintained throughout the sessions and the correct amount of staff on duty hold suitable qualifications. Staff work well as a team and good communication and guidance allows them to provide a well-balanced and smooth flowing programme throughout the day. An effective recruitment policy ensures staff are suitable to work with children. All required documentation and parental consents are in place. This enhances children's health and welfare.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Children benefit from qualified and experienced staff who are very caring and committed to attending further childcare training and development courses, which management support. All staff have input into the planning that provides a good balance of adult and child led activities to allow the children to develop at their own pace indoors. This has not yet been extended to benefit the children

through the inclusion of the outdoor environment in the six areas of learning. All staff are involved in the monitoring and recording of children's achievements. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

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 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):

- ensure procedures are in place to obtain prior written consent to administer non-prescribed medication.
- review risk assessment procedures to ensure that safety issues and possible hazards indoors and outdoors are identified and addressed promptly

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):

- continue to extend the curriculum to include the six areas of learning, through planning and the use of resources in the outdoor area

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