

Saplings Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY347502
Inspection date	18 July 2008
Inspector	Lynn Clements
Setting Address	Pledgdon Close, Henham, BISHOP'S STORTFORD, Hertfordshire, CM22 6BJ
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Registered person	Jen Phillips
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Saplings Nursery registered in 2007 having re-located from their previous premises. It operates from a house in the village of Henham near to Bishops Stortford. A maximum of 54 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 07.30 until 18.30 all year round. There are currently 87 children on roll. Of these 17 receive early education funding. Children come from the local and wider community. A bus service is provided for those families who require it. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It also has effective strategies in place to support children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs 25 staff; 15 of the staff, including the manager, hold an appropriate early years qualification and one member of staff holds qualified teacher status. There are currently four members of staff working towards relevant training. The nursery is supported by the Local Authority, the Pre-School Learning Alliance and the Area Special Needs Coordinator.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about the importance of personal hygiene. Older children independently wash their hands before snack, after messy play or when they have been to the toilet. Younger children are supported by members of staff to develop effective hygiene techniques. All children are able to help themselves to water when thirsty whilst babies' fluid intake is monitored and recorded. This ensures that no child remains thirsty. All health related documentation is in place and updated as required to meet changes in children's requirements and in legislation. Prescribed medication is kept safely and a record of administration is maintained and shared with parents and carers to prevent accidental overdose when their child returns home. All members of staff have completed relevant first aid training and this enables them to deliver effective care in the event of an emergency. A record of accidents occurring on the premises is maintained by staff and shared with parents and carers; this ensures that children receive appropriate care on their return home. A clear sick child policy is implemented in practice to protect children from the spread of infection.

Parents and carers share relevant information about their child's individual needs, such as medical and dietary requirements. This enables staff to protect children from harm. In addition parents' and carers' wishes are respected. This information is updated as required to meet children's changing needs. Cooks are employed by the nursery to ensure that children receive nutritious meals and snacks. Charts are maintained regarding individual dietary needs and these are used when planning menus to ensure that children are protected from foods which could harm them. There are very good opportunities for children to learn about and taste different foods. Snack and lunch time, cooking activities and topics enable children to learn about the world through food. Clear hygiene procedures are in place to ensure children's health is protected with regard to food preparation. Children build on their independent skills as they pour their own drinks, help themselves to snack and learn about helping others and using good table manners. Children are encouraged and supported to explore their personal likes or dislikes within a calm and relaxed environment.

Children have very good opportunities to develop their physical skills. They enjoy the outside areas which enable them to explore activities on a larger scale than is possible indoors. Children use single-handed tools with competence and control as they cut with scissors or use paint brushes, pens and pencils during creative activities. They use larger apparatus, such as climbing frames and jungle gyms, developing their hand-eye coordination and balance. They move their bodies with control and learn that exercise helps to keep them fit and healthy. Children demonstrate good spatial awareness as they move around the setting both inside and outside, negotiating pathways and avoiding obstacles or each other. All children are able to rest or be active according to their individual needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are secure and well maintained. Attention to wall displays and information boards provide a welcoming environment. In addition, using children's creations in the displays provides them with a sense of achievement, as they proudly show what they have done. A visitor record is maintained and identification is checked. Children are never left alone with people who have not had a criminal record check. There is a very good range of child-height furniture and

equipment; this enables them to play in safety and comfort. All equipment and furniture is regularly checked to ensure it remains in safe, good condition for the children to use.

Daily checks of all child-accessible areas are conducted. Risk assessments are in place. However, these do not take account of all potential hazards inside or outside. For example, windows in the upper classrooms do not have restraints on them and the front garden used by older children is not fully enclosed. Whilst staff demonstrate that they protect children from harm, current risk assessments do not formally ensure that all aspects of the nursery are operating safely. Children learn to keep themselves safe. For example, they tidy away after playing to prevent tripping hazards. Older children mop up spills and take an active role in keeping hazards to a minimum. They learn about people who help them, such as the police and fire service. Whilst taking nature walks in the local countryside, they learn about road safety and keeping together.

Staff have completed safeguarding children training. They have a clear understanding about the signs and symptoms of abuse. Clear procedures are in place to ensure that children are protected from harm. There is a designated person on site who coordinates any referrals and fully understands how to work with other agencies. Children's welfare remains paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are eager to attend and relish their time in the vibrant setting. Children are animated and enthusiastic as they make choices about the activities they want to explore or the games they want to play. They demonstrate warm and caring relationships with each other and members of staff. Children move around freely, making their own choices and engaging in purposeful learning opportunities through play. Staff know their children extremely well. Time is taken prior to placement to ensure that information about each child and what they enjoy doing is in place. This provides staff with important, relevant information about children's starting points. This system is ongoing as children move through the classes within the nursery. Staff plan and provide a wide range of activities based on the children's interests. This captures children's imagination and participation. For example, when staff visit the local library, they select books on topics which the children enjoy, such as whales and sea creatures or teddy bears and shapes. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is implemented in practice and used effectively to support younger children's development. Attention to observing and building on what children know and can do is a particular strength of the setting. Children become engrossed in a wide range of purposeful and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities which provide high levels of challenge to meet their particular needs according to their age and stage of development. They work confidently on their own or in groups as they investigate natural and man made materials, such as water or dried pasta and glitter. Children construct from a variety of media including building blocks. They use appropriate language and gestures to communicate their needs, ideas and experiences. Skilled, dedicated practitioners consistently give their utmost to promote children's well-being and support them to develop their potential.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Attention to observing, assessing and using this information to inform planning is excellent. Staff continue to adapt and develop their strategies with the children in mind. They have a very clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn through play and purposeful experiences. They understand about putting learning into context and giving children time to develop and share their ideas at their

own pace. Teaching is consistently challenging for all groups of children. The activities and experiences provided are exceptionally well matched to children's needs and interests. Teaching methods are varied and exciting, taking account of children's differing learning styles and previous experiences. Assessment is rigorous and the information gained is used clearly to identify children's next steps for learning. Overall children make excellent progress towards the six early learning goals.

Children develop their communication, language and literacy. They learn about and link sounds to letters. They share stories and use the pictures as clues to the text or join in repeated refrains. They ascribe meanings to marks and use their developing skills as they make up stories and begin writing their names or assembling letters on magnetic boards to make up words. They demonstrate good thinking and listening skills during circle time whilst sharing their news from home. They develop simple calculation skills, as they compare elephants, adding up how many purple ones they have. In addition to this, they join in number rhymes and songs which help to consolidate previous learning and enables them to practise their developing skills. Children create repeating patterns as they build towers from coloured bricks. They confidently match numbers to the relevant symbols and count to five and beyond.

Children learn about the wider world during topics and outings. Visitors to the setting, such as the fire service or police, help to bring topics, such as people who help us, to life and provide a marvellous opportunity for children to explore through first hand experiences. Children use computers with competence and skill. They enjoy using the outside play space, noticing aeroplanes flying overhead or stopping to watch with interest as the recycling lorry arrives to take away the waste. Walks in the local area provide further opportunities for the children to learn about the world on their door step. Children thoroughly enjoy running, climbing and using their bodies in different ways as they match movements to action rhymes and songs. They create, using their imagination during painting, cutting and sticking activities or whilst engaged in role play. Children use their imagination based on real experiences as they re-create an aeroplane and take their seats ready for the pilot to fly them to far off places. Children make exceptionally good progress in their learning and development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide children with plenty of resources and activities which build on their curiosity as learners as they explore the wider world. Topics and resources enable children to develop their own ideas and ask questions about difference. All children are treated as individuals. Staff know the children extremely well and provide a wealth of meaningful, relevant activities which enable them to take part at a pace and level which suits them. Children have a secure understanding of the wider society and different customs. Walks out and about provide regular opportunities for them to learn about the world on their door step. Trips on their school bus provide further opportunities for them to learn about the wider world in which they live. Staff organise trips and invite visitors into the nursery, enabling the children to learn through first hand experiences and discussions. Staff ensure there is no bias in their practice in relation to gender, race or disability.

There are very clear and effective procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff have accessed relevant training and the support of the local authority to support the children in their care. Attention is focused on ensuring that the nursery remains an inclusive environment and that both children and staff work closely together so that everyone is fully included. Dedication is obvious, as staff learn different communication

techniques, for example, Makaton. These acquired skills are used extremely well to support those children who have little verbal communication. Staff work as a team with the parents or carers to ensure learning needs are met effectively. Staff provide parents and carers with clear information, and all parties work together in the best interests of the child.

Relationships are exceptionally good at all levels. Children are very much valued as individuals and develop extremely positive attitudes towards others. They learn to respect each other and share resources. They negotiate turn taking to ensure everyone has a fair chance. Children benefit from the consistent routines and a secure approach to their care. For example, they talk with each other and members of staff about being kind and using gentle hands. They explore their emotions and staff validate their positive behaviour using plenty of descriptive praise and encouragement. This raises children's confidence and self-esteem. Children are willing to take part in activities without fear of failure.

Parents are respected and open communications both written and verbal take place on a daily basis to support all children effectively. These include relevant information for parents and carers about their child's individual care needs throughout the day and the activities they have been interested in exploring. This provides parents and carers with an important insight into their child's day at the nursery. Notice boards and general information about the setting is clear and extremely well presented. Clear information is available about the different learning opportunities that are organised for the children. This information is included in the operational plan and the parent and carer handbook. Parents and carers are fully encouraged to spend time in the setting, sharing their interests and skills or sending in objects and items of interest for show and tell or topics. Displays of children's creations and newsletters containing information about various topics provide further information for parents and carers about what their children enjoy doing or what they are going to explore next. Space is also made in the newsletters for 'parent, carer stop', a section written by parents or carers for parents and carers. Displays also ensure that the environment remains bright and welcoming. Children's needs are being met exceptionally well because staff work closely with their parents or carers. This partnership provides continuity for children as they move between their home and the nursery. Information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage is shared.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education funding is outstanding. Very clear records of assessment are in place and shared with parents and carers on a regular basis. Open evenings are planned at the end of each term, this ensures that children's progress is closely monitored by key persons and their parents or carers. Clear observations of what the children enjoy doing at nursery are shared and parents and carers are encouraged to share observations of what their children achieve at home. This provides important information for key persons and gives them a balanced picture of the whole child. Planning information is provided for parents and carers on a weekly basis and displayed in the classrooms. They also take an active role in their child's early years as they provide artefacts and objects of interest from home which help to bring activities and learning opportunities to life. Parents' views and opinions are valued by the staff and all work together to ensure that children make extremely good progress towards developing their full potential.

Staff are directly involved in children's learning and all children are included and treated with equal concern. Children learn to share and help each other. They encourage others to join in their games and make room for them during role play activities or when they sit together for snack. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Outcomes for children are excellent. All policies and procedures are individual to the setting. A clear operational plan is in place, kept up to date and made available to parents. However, the inclusion of risk assessments is limited. A wide range of helpful policies and procedures have been developed and implemented in practice. This helps to ensure the safe day to day management of the setting. Registration systems are in place and include both children and staff hours of attendance, so that everyone can be safely accounted for at all times. All records are stored securely and confidentiality is respected. Extremely robust procedures are in place for the employment of staff and the monitoring of volunteers. This ensures that children are protected from harm.

Children are cared for by dedicated, caring staff who have an exceptionally good knowledge and understanding of child development. The vast majority of staff hold relevant qualifications, with a considerable amount holding levels higher than those required under the National Standards. The remaining staff are currently working towards recognised early years qualifications. Clear staff induction procedures are in place and ongoing appraisals are implemented to support existing members of staff. Attention to continuing professional development is excellent and ensures that standards remain high and practice relevant. The care of staff, by management is very good and this is reflected in the long standing, established staff team. The organisation of the setting ensures that children are exceptionally well cared for. Overall, children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of early education is outstanding. Whilst the manager oversees the daily running of the nursery, key personnel ensure that the classes run smoothly to meet the individual needs of each and every child attending. The delivery of the Foundation Stage is carefully monitored to ensure that children make extremely good progress. Staff share information about each child so targeted support is effective. All rooms are very much a part of the whole nursery. This inclusive approach enables children to develop their self-esteem and a feeling of belonging, ultimately helping them to move through the nursery with ease and confidence.

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.

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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):

- further develop risk assessments to ensure all hazards both inside and outside are clearly identified and action taken to minimise these where necessary.

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