

Treetops

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY362174
Inspection date	23 June 2008
Inspector	Susan Parker
Setting Address	Duncombe School, 4 Warren Park Road, HERTFORD, SG14 3JA
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Registered person	Cognita Limited
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?

Treetops in Hertford is part of a chain of schools run by Cognita Schools Ltd. It opened in 2007 and operates from seven rooms in a purpose-built building. It is situated in a residential area of Hertford. A maximum of 140 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday offering wrap around care from 07.30 to 18.00 during term time only. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a very warm, clean and hygienic environment where children are gaining a positive understanding of good hygiene practices, such as washing hands before eating. They are actively encouraged to develop their independence in their personal care through excellent procedures, which are in place to minimise the potential for cross-infection. Staff act as excellent role models.

Children's physical, nutritional and health needs thrive due to the outstanding procedures and practices implemented by the staff. Children's physical development is significantly enhanced as they enjoy an excellent range of purposeful activities, which contribute to their good health. For example, children have a good choice from a selection of outdoor activities and equipment, which enable children to develop control of their bodies as they run, jump, ride on wheeled toys, climb and balance. Children are able to choose when to play outside and have daily access to outdoor play areas where they can develop their physical skills in safety.

Children are full of confidence. They try out new skills eagerly and feel comfortable in asking for help when needed, this is a result of the staff's very good understanding of each child's stage of development, thoughtful provision of resources and sensitive encouragement.

Children help themselves to easily accessible drinks and enjoy an excellent range of healthy snacks. They are very well nourished as the staff have a superb understanding of healthy eating. Children are encouraged to eat healthily and are learning about healthy foods and the benefits they have on their growth and development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a safe, well-organised, child-centred provision where hazards are minimised and staff are conscientious in their precautions to ensure that all children are protected from harm. This purpose-built building enables children to move around their play areas freely and independently. Children gain a sense of responsibility as they move around the tables and equipment inside and outside. Older children descend the stairs in a safe and well-organised manner. They are learning about keeping themselves safe as they participate in routines such as regular fire drills. They are learning about hazards through clear behaviour boundaries and rules, such as why they need to hold the handrail when going down stairs. This promotes the children's understanding of assessing risks for themselves.

The environment is rich and stimulating with brightly coloured posters, photographs and children's artwork displayed. This makes the children feel welcome and part of the group. Children make full use of the excellent range of high quality equipment, which is safe, attractively displayed, well maintained and suitable for the children's use. They are able to select and access the play resources as they are easily accessible and the staff are vigilant in their monitoring and supervision. High-risk areas such as the outside play area are checked thoroughly for hazards before children arrive each day.

Children are very well protected by the staff team as they have an exemplary understanding of child protection procedures, well supported by clear and detailed documents, policies and records. Entry to the nursery is secure. The door is actively monitored and entry is by coded entry system. All visitors are supervised by staff at all times and are required to sign in the main school visitor's book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children clearly enjoy the happy and stimulating atmosphere as they enthusiastically participate in exciting and purposeful activities. They are making excellent progress in their learning, self-esteem and development because the staff are very knowledgeable about how to gain children's interest to enable them to be active learners. Staff follow a well-organised routine,

which promotes children's feelings of security and stability. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Staff actively encourage and build children's confidence and vocabulary through constant praise and recognition. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development and level of understanding. This helps them to ensure that they effectively and imaginatively meet the needs of all children. The committed and knowledgeable staff team are suitably qualified and dedicated to the concept of providing high quality childcare and education. They allow children freedom of choice to engage in well-planned activities, which capture their interest. Staff provide excellent support to draw the learning from play. This promotes positive outcomes for children. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, which is included in all aspects of planning and provision of learning activities. These secure systems underpin the foundations of the educational programme for all children who attend the provision.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage and of how children learn through play. Staff meet formally as a team to share and collate ideas linked to their current topic and encompass all the areas of learning. This forms the basis of their long-term objectives. They then formulate their weekly plans to provide stimulating activities and challenges to meet the developmental needs of the children and cover the six areas of learning. The children learn very early on what behaviour is acceptable through sensitive behaviour management techniques. The clear boundaries support children's sense of security and give them an understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Children's achievements and progress is assessed through regular observations, which forms the basis of the next steps on their learning journey.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is very well nurtured. They are attentive and respectful of adult and peers alike. For example, they know to be quiet and listen when someone is talking and to take turns. Children are developing their independence in dressing and toileting themselves. Their self-esteem is promoted as they proudly talk about their rooms, resources and displays. Children build an awareness of phonetic links as they have many opportunities to recognise their names, familiar words and sounds. They are encouraged to enjoy books and they handle books well. They take time to look at the pictorial illustrations before turning the page to continue the story. Children have plentiful opportunities to mark make and are beginning to form recognisable letters, words and eventually sentences as they practice writing in every day play situations.

Children are developing a growing awareness of number. Older and more able children can calculate in practical situations, and actively subtract using popular number rhymes and fun activities. Numbers are everywhere, giving the children familiarity with their form and order.

Children have regular access to explore technological equipment, such as computers and battery-operated toys. They are learning about 'Things that use electricity' in a practical way. They develop an awareness of the wider world as they celebrate a wide variety of traditions and cultural events throughout the year, and have links with the people in the local community.

Children are learning about nature and science as they watch a caterpillar develop through the stages to emerge as a butterfly in their own classroom. They grow plants from seeds, look at mini beasts and share the care of two friendly guinea pigs.

Children are agile and competent in their physical skills. They have access to an excellent range of outdoor equipment, which promotes muscle growth, control and strength. They have daily access to a range of tools, such as various sized pens and pencils to draw, scissors to cut and shape, paintbrushes and glue spreaders. They also have access to different types of construction sets. Children have exciting imaginations. They enjoy making individual creations using an excellent selection of media and materials. Children regularly role-play, using an excellent selection of dressing up. Children can feed their imaginations and become whoever they want to be. They eagerly participate in dance, musical instruments, and singing and action songs. They are encouraged to recognise specific tunes and sounds, rhythm and rhyme.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are welcomed, their individual needs and abilities are clearly understood and valued by the adults in the provision. Staff have secure knowledge and understanding of all current legislation and are very inventive in the provision of a wide range of exciting learning activities. They ensure that all children are cared for and all their possible needs are effectively met. Staff are proactive in promoting the welfare and development of all children they have developed excellent practices to ensure all children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully integrated. This is supported by excellent working practices with parents and external agencies.

Children's behaviour is very good. They are aware of what is expected of them, are calm, share, take turns and enjoy each other's company. The staff use superb skills to encourage and help them to understand moral and social codes of behaviour, and to develop positive relationships with one another. Children are very receptive to the praise and encouragement that is freely given.

Staff are very proactive in promoting the good welfare and development of children. This is done by promoting a close working relationship with parents and external agencies. Children learn to value each other's similarities and differences through excellent planning of themes, sensitive discussions, stories, activities and the use of developmentally appropriate resources. Children are developing warm relationships with each other and the staff team, they help and support each other, and are aware of and sensitive to the individual abilities of the other children.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents' views about their child's needs are actively sought before the child commences at the setting and throughout their time there. Parents have access to the wealth of policies and procedures, which underpin the running of this enthusiastic group. Parents are well informed of their child's achievements and progress through regular open days, meetings and verbal daily feedback on the children and what they have been doing. Staff encourage parents to share their expertise and knowledge to enhance the provision of nursery education. This ensures that children's care, well-being and education are greatly enhanced. The Nursery Education programme links closely with parents ensuring that they are fully involved in all topics and information is shared effectively.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered through the exceptional daily practices. Children are developing a growing understanding of good social skills, the differences and similarities between themselves and their peers, and have an excellent understanding of good manners and socially accepted codes of behaviour.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The enthusiastic, committed and dedicated staff team, sound and detailed documentation, and positive working relationships with parents and carers, ensure that children's development is greatly enhanced at this provision.

Staff are exceptionally skilled and competent in their childcare practice. They demonstrate a real affinity with children. They use their wealth of experience and their ongoing training to provide a wide range of exciting, practical and stimulating learning opportunities. The staff are receptive to improvement and are consistently striving to provide a fully inclusive, high quality provision for children. They are committed to ensuring that they are well versed in all current and future regulations and guidance in order to provide excellent care and education for all children. Staff have an excellent working knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are effectively correlating the two early year's programmes together. This promotes a unified curriculum for all children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The manager shows excellent management skills and she is supported in her role by the experienced and knowledgeable head of the main school. There are effective links with the bank staff and agencies to ensure that the high ratios continue to enhance the welfare of the children. The nursery welcomes the input from external agencies and is always looking for ways in which the excellent practice can be developed. The group are working towards achieving the Hertfordshire Quality Standard Award.

Staff are highly competent. They are able to draw incidental learning from the daily routine naturally. This supports the balance and coverage across all aspects of the curriculum. They are supportive of each other and flexible in their working, ensuring the needs of the children are being met at all times. They are fully involved in assessing strengths and weaknesses in the nursery. They access training and attend relevant workshops to ensure they are fully versed in all current guidelines.

The excellent management structure enables the nursery to be proactive in its monitoring and evaluation of the nursery education. Staff all work together as a cohesive team. The ethos throughout the nursery is the development of the children into secure confident learners who thrive in the imaginative and stimulating environment. Planning and assessment are evaluated and used to inform future planning. This ensures the needs of children are being met through the inclusion of all and the adaptation of activities.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not Applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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

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