

Little Otters Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	103037
Inspection date	16/03/2009
Inspector	Julie Wright
Setting address	Marshgate, Camelford, Cornwall, PL32 9YN
Telephone number	01840 261593
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Children only attend this setting before and/or after the school day and/or during the school holidays. The judgements in this report reflect the quality of early years provision offered to children during those periods.

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Little Otters Children's Centre has been in operation since 1991. It is located on the outskirts of Otterham, near to the village of Marshgate. It has its own purpose built premises which opened in September 1999. It is a registered charity and is managed by a board of trustees made up of parents and interested others. The setting is open five days a week all year round and is open from 08.00 to 17.30.

The premises consist of an office, children's toilets, staff and disabled toilet, a kitchen, a nursery area for babies, and two playrooms, of which the larger one is used for three to five-year-old children. There is also an enclosed outside play area. A maximum of 29 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 43 children aged from three months to 11 years on roll, of these, 40 are in the early years age group. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

The setting employs 11 staff to work with the children, six of whom have suitable childcare qualifications and three are currently working towards recognised early years qualifications. The setting is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives support from the local authority.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good. Children are well cared for in a welcoming and stimulating environment. They form secure relationships and make good progress in all areas of their development. Staff promote children's health, safety and welfare with the effective implementation of the setting's policies and procedures. Partnerships with parents are strong and contribute significantly to meeting the individual needs of children. The provider successfully evaluates and monitors practice, resulting in continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- seek initial information from parents regarding children's capabilities and provide opportunities for parents to contribute to children's records of development
- continue to develop opportunities for parents to be involved in children's learning and improve links with other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, where children attend more than one setting
- improve the opportunities for children to develop their understanding of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, to practise skills and develop confidence in their use.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The committee, manager and staff provide a well organised facility where children are nurtured and learn through play. Staff are deployed effectively to meet the needs of the children and support their development. The activity programmes promote children's individual learning and progress. Staff have a clear understanding of the EYFS framework and the requirements are securely met. Since the last inspection the setting has addressed previous recommendations, resulting in significant improvements to the systems in observation, assessment and evaluation. The setting successfully identifies areas to develop and improve, for example, the outdoor play area is a key focus. Staff attend appropriate training for their personal and professional development.

Partnerships with parents, carers and others are good, with clear procedures in place to promote inclusion. Parents provide very positive feedback on their children's progress and value the care given. They are well informed about children's activities and development through regular newsletters and meetings. Policies are readily available to parents, including the procedures to safeguard children. The nursery has some links with other providers of the EYFS framework. However, this does not consistently apply for each child who attends more than one setting. Robust vetting and recruitment procedures are in place to ensure that children are cared for by suitable persons. Records and documentation are clearly organised and maintained in good order, which contribute to children's welfare.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children are cared for in two groups, the 'Pups' for babies aged from three months and children up to the age of three years. The 'Otters' room provides care for children over the age of three years. Children also benefit from mixed group opportunities, which helps particularly at times of transition. For example, when children are due to move from the younger group to the other room, they are already familiar with the staff and play areas. Staff have a suitable key person system, which contributes to children feeling secure and forming good relationships. This also means that staff develop a sound knowledge of children's personal abilities, interests and development. They observe, assess and plan for children's individual progress within the daily activities. Development records provide clear evidence of children's achievements and are routinely shared with parents. However, parents do not have the opportunity to contribute to these. Staff seek initial information from parents about their children's general care needs and routines, although this does not include details of children's capabilities and starting points. Parents have some opportunities to be involved in children's learning. For instance, when children take turns to take a special bear and diary home for the night. However, this activity is limited to one term each year. The setting has recently introduced a toy lending service, which encourages shared learning in the home.

Children take packed lunches, have access to regular drinks and their individual dietary requirements are met. They learn about healthy foods, such as fresh fruit

and vegetables at snack times. Children also take part in activities involving food, for example, when baking cakes and making 'fruit faces'. They sow seeds and grow plants in the garden, which helps them to understand where produce originates. Fun activities further promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world. They enjoy the experience of seeing and touching animals from a visitor service, including a skunk, bearded dragon and a barn owl. Watching caterpillars grow and eggs incubate develops their interest in nature, which is then extended as they hunt for insects in the garden. Children develop a sense of community as local people join them to help with the development of the new outdoor play area. They become aware that people live in different places, some of which are a 'long way' and that they 'might have to travel on a plane'. Positional language is used in some activities and children learn to match, sort and name shapes. They play games and sing songs which involve numbers and counting. However, opportunities for children to develop mathematical ideas and solve simple problems are not always taken.

The routines meet the needs of children attending and provide a balance of child initiated and adult led play. Children move around with confidence, exploring and investigating the accessible play materials. For instance, younger children show their curiosity as they take everyday resources from a low level table. They examine various objects made from a range of materials, such as metal, wood and fabric. Children develop competence in the use of tools and equipment as they paint, stick and cut in creative activities. Sand, water and dough provide further sensory play experiences for children. Staff interact well with the children, gently supporting their play and promoting learning. Children develop concentration, language and literacy skills as they sit and listen to stories or join in singing sessions. Staff use visual aids at story time, such as puppets, which helps the children to focus. They plan interesting activities which link to current themes or topics. For example, a visit from the police helps children learn about people who help them. Children understand the expectations of behaviour and simple rules, so they become aware of safety in everyday situations. They play cooperatively together and enjoy helping staff at 'tidy-up time'.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted.

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.