

The Cottage Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Rosemary Davies

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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 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).

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

The Cottage Nursery opened in 1987 and moved to its current site in 2000. It became a limited company with three directors in 2008 but remains a registered charity. The nursery operates from a single storey building attached to the community centre in the village of Watchfield, near Faringdon on the Wiltshire / Oxfordshire border. The building is owned by the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, which is located at Watchfield and takes military personnel from all over the world. Most children attending the nursery come from military families and reflect the cultural diversity of the Defence Academy. Children attending from civilian families come from Watchfield and its surrounding villages, together with the nearby towns of Swindon and Faringdon.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 150 children, at any one time. There are currently 149 children aged from seven months to under five years on roll. Children are accommodated in one of six rooms. There is ready access to outdoor play areas with varying surfaces. The nursery opens for five week days all year round, with the exception of bank holidays, a week between Christmas and New Year, and a week in August. It offers funded nursery education during school terms for three and four-year-olds. It opens between 08.00 and 18.00. Children attend for a variety of times. The nursery supports children who learn English as an additional language. Most children from military families stay for short periods only.

The nursery has 31 staff in total, 16 of whom hold appropriate qualifications at Level 2. A further 11 hold appropriate qualifications at level 3.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is good. The senior management team get to know each child and their family on entry to the nursery and the use of an effective 'key person' system results in children being treated as individuals, whose needs are met well. All children, including the many learning English as an additional language, enjoy a positive experience of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), in which they make good progress overall. The senior management team demonstrate a thorough understanding of the EYFS and maintains effective systems overall from which to evaluate the nursery's provision. They know what they want to achieve next and plan ahead effectively, so are well placed to maintain improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop a better balance in outdoor play activities, so all six areas of learning are covered effectively; continue to explore ways of allowing children individual choice between indoor or outdoor play

- improve the programme for literacy by promoting letter sounds more regularly, teaching letter formation for children who are keen to write and work with other practitioners from schools to which children will transfer, if known, to introduce the same letter formation style, in order to aid transitions.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

In this large nursery, staff work together successfully as a team to promote good outcomes for children. They receive strong leadership from the senior management team, which is clearly committed to improving the provision further, communicating a clear vision for the nursery's future. This is achieved through effective evaluation of the provision that accurately pinpoints most areas needing improvement, such as outdoor learning, although a minor weakness in the literacy programme has not been identified.

Systems for safeguarding children are excellent. All adults who work in the nursery are cleared as suitable to do so. Excellent security systems prevent visitors entering unchallenged and these are reinforced by parents. Robust risk assessments keep children safe, are implemented by all staff and monitored effectively. The nursery is well resourced overall, although the outdoor area is not used fully. All required documentation, including a log of complaints, is kept appropriately and extremely methodically. Documentation systems support the smooth, safe and efficient running of the nursery and contribute effectively to ensuring all children's welfare needs are met. Policies are reviewed annually.

The nursery works very closely with parents, who speak warmly of the staff team's caring attitudes. It offers very flexible settling arrangements to accommodate the needs of all attending, including babies and children learning English as an additional language who join the nursery later from abroad. The nursery acts on advice from outside professionals with whom there are good partnerships; for example, the advisory teacher helps instigate more personalised learning and an improved snack time. Currently, transition arrangements do not fully support children in their move to school.

Strong emphasis is placed on staff gaining further qualifications and undertaking regular training. The nursery adopts a transparent approach, so that parents may be fully aware of staff suitability for their roles. Parents' views are sought and changes made, so children enjoy a more diverse breakfast menu and communications with parents improve.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children across the nursery enjoy learning through exploratory play based on their interests and capabilities. Children use spacious rooms in which staff create suitable learning environments. Many rooms are 'zoned' to provide special areas, for example, book corners, computer tables and 'messy play' areas. These support children's progress well across the six required learning areas. Staff adopt a

flexible approach to the use of resources, so that children move them from one area to another, as they wish, which supports their investigative and imaginative play.

As children move through the nursery, staff encourage them to make good use of their new skills. The oldest ones recognise their names and 'self-register'. They develop as independent learners, confidently moving around their playrooms and deciding what they wish to do.

Throughout the nursery, staff achieve a good balance of adult-led and child-chosen play. All children experience times outside, getting fresh air and exercise, although outdoor learning lacks breadth. It tends to concentrate on acquiring physical skills and participating in action songs, with insufficient scope to experience other learning.

A 'key person' system works effectively to welcome children into the nursery, including those learning English as an additional language. It provides continued good emotional support. It is used well overall, to help track children's progress in the EYFS. There is a weakness in the literacy programme. Staff do not promote letter sounds sufficiently or teach letter formation to children who are keen to write their names. This limits progress in gaining skills for their future lives, although they learn to use information and communications technology competently and develop their numeracy skills well.

Children's safety and good health are maintained to exceptionally high standards. Individual staff know their particular roles and responsibilities in contributing to these, carefully following stipulated procedures. Risk assessments cover not only playrooms, the outdoor play area and outings but also the car park and reception area in this busy nursery that has many deliveries daily.

Children learn about healthy living and how to keep themselves safe from staff who act as good role models for them, for example, not only reminding children of the need to pick up resources so that no-one trips but showing them what to do. Children learn positive attitudes from enthusiastic staff and behave well.

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?	1

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?	1
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
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?	3

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met