

Oak Cottage Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY385269
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Inspector Chris Mackinnon

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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).

Description of the setting

Oak Cottage Nursery was registered under its current management in 2008. The nursery building is accessed by a short set of steps and is situated on Warren Road in the Woodingdean area of Brighton and Hove. Childcare takes place on the ground and first floor, with children also having access to enclosed outdoor play areas. The nursery is open five days a week, from 8.00am to 6.00pm. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 42 children in the early years age group may attend at any time, and there are currently 101 children on roll. The nursery is also in receipt of funding for the provision of free early years education. There is a staff team of 15 and most have appropriate early years qualifications, with three staff members currently studying childcare to degree level.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

The overall quality of the provision is outstanding. The setting's organisation and management is of a significantly high standard, with a dedicated and well trained staff team, successfully supporting individual children's progress. Children enjoy a highly organised learning environment, with a wide range of play areas that provide challenge, stimulation and many exciting development opportunities. Children enjoy a highly organised and engaging range of play and learning activities, and their welfare needs are successfully supported and well maintained. The planning and presentation of the children's learning programme is excellent and the observation and assessment of children's achievements is exemplary. The staff take care to build close partnerships with parents and carers, and the setting's inclusive practice and support for equal opportunities is highly organised and consistent.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- continuing the development of staff teaching skills within the six areas of learning

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The nursery's outstanding quality is successfully maintained by a highly trained and experienced staff team. Nearly all staff members have completed NVQ training to level 3 and the nursery also has specialists in learning development and special educational needs within the staff team. The nursery has several staff whose training is currently approaching degree level, and this provides considerable positive input into the organisation and management of the nursery, particularly with the introduction of new initiatives and maintaining continuous improvement.

Most staff have now completed training for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the nursery has an ongoing staff training development plan, with well established links with the local early years advisory service. For example, the nursery recently completed the Brighton and Hove ICAN speech and communication accreditation scheme, which assess how language is used within the nursery to promote children's development and learning progress.

There are clearly a number of outstanding aspects to nursery's organisation, and one in particular is the successful establishment of a senior staff management team. This greatly enhances the confidence and ability of the nursery staff overall, and provides good and distinct leadership. The staff continue to be effectively supported by a manager and a deputy, but they now also have access to a wider group of skilled practitioners for guidance and support. Another significant and outstanding aspect of the nursery's successful organisation, is the good use that is made of key-person working. As well as ensuring that individual children's care and welfare is promoted, individual staff areas of expertise are also identified which also contributes greatly to the depth and flexibility of staff deployment and effectiveness.

There are also a great many strengths within the nursery's practice that help to make it outstanding. First is the highly successful delivery of a well planned and stimulating learning programme. The observation and assessment of individual children's learning progress is also highly organised and confidently established. The nursery also has a clear strength in its provision of an attractive and stimulating play and learning environment. Children benefit greatly from being able to explore the wide range of play areas and have much fun in the nursery's computer room and soft-play room.

The nursery has a consistent and highly organised approach to self-evaluation. The staff team have a clear understanding of the need for reflective practice, and are able to regularly appraise the learning content of activities and assess how children are benefiting. A good example of this is the recent Children's Transition project introduced within the nursery, to more closely support how children commence at the nursery, grow and progress and then finally transit to school. The organisation of the learning environment is also frequently revised and re-organised, and children are consistently observed as they explore resources and engage in play. The nursery has also successfully completed the Ofsted self-evaluation document, which includes several clearly identified areas for development and improvement.

The nursery has a sound strength in its commitment maintaining good working partnerships with parents. This is effectively achieved by much close contact between parents and their children's key persons. Staff take much good care to support and include parents with day-to-day information on individual children's healthy growth and development. Parents are encouraged to be closely involved in their children's learning, and staff key-persons make much good use of photos and individual children's learning records to consistently involve and inform parents. Parents are also asked to be part of their children's introduction to the setting, as staff establish the children's learning journeys and starting points. Staff gather information regularly from parents on children's interests and home based activities, which also has a beneficial impact on children's learning and the staff

members' knowledge of individual children.

Children are effectively safeguarded within the nursery and staff have a clear understanding of the need to protect children and keep them secure. Close consideration is given to ensuring all children feel welcome and key-person staff are committed to supporting individual children and maintaining their health and well being. A highly organised and consistent policy of continual staff training ensures that appropriate safeguarding awareness is maintained. The nursery also has well written policy guidance on safeguarding procedures and clear links with local child protection support.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Staff provide a highly successful and dynamic range of activities, to meet the learning needs of the children attending. The nursery has two distinct learning areas, organised on the ground and first floors, which allows staff to plan and present a variety of play environments to focus on the learning expectations of the different ages. The nursery follows a term plan that includes well organised learning themes, that are then broken down into weekly plans. All of the six early learning goals are successfully included in the play plans to ensure children learn how to count, use words, and learn about the wider world. Children have much child-initiated play and staff are skilled in using children's own ideas and interests. For example, by using the nursery rhyme Three Little Pigs as a starting point, an ongoing learning project was devised, based on building houses and looking at all different types of materials. This project also involved some good discovery and child-led learning as the children explored the properties of straw, wood and stone. Children's development is also well supported with planned activities that encourages their tactile and sensory awareness, and engages them in using tools and a wide range of materials. Children's learning is also effectively supported with planned seasonal activities. For example, staff successfully plan and organise a summer play-scheme for a limited group of children, with holiday based activities, group games and many outdoor activities.

The nursery demonstrates an excellent awareness of how to support and extend children's learning. During the wide range of activities, staff are able to introduce counting and learning about shapes and sizes. Many good examples of problem solving challenges are provided by staff as children explore art-crafts and cutting and sticking activities. During the many and varied times children engage in role play, staff demonstrate much skill and confidence in supporting their imaginative and creative abilities. Children's personal and social development is also consistently promoted during play activities, and staff members frequently ask children questions to prompt their awareness of feelings and emotions. A good example of staff extending children's learning is shown by a recent learning project based on pirates, which was extended by the children into making and finding out about telescopes. The children successfully explored paper and card and enjoyed many days of engaging learning. The nursery staff have a definite and clear ability to effectively ensure children develop and make progress in their learning, and all six of the early learning goals are well explored and extended. A recent feature of the setting's reflective practice revealed a staff wish to re-establish and consolidate

their teaching skills within the six learning areas. As this is an ongoing development area for the staff team, it is noted as an area for continuing improvement.

The nursery staff are all highly confident in how they monitor and assess children's progress and achievement. An outstanding feature of the nursery's practice is the diligence and care applied to the observation and recording of children's learning. Each child has a well organised set of folders and note-books designed to mark their learning journey and progress through the learning stages. Staff ensure that full and detailed notes are kept up-to-date on children's development, and much good use is also made of photos of children, engaged in activities to give a clear visual indicator of individual learning and enjoyment and how the nursery impacts positively on children's growth and progress. The well established key person system is also used effectively to follow children's progress, and to ensure children's next steps in learning are clearly identified. Staff also effectively share information on children's progress with their parents and other carers.

The nursery is committed to ensuring children's welfare needs are fully met and supported within the nursery setting. Clearly organised procedures are in place to keep children secure, and the nursery has detailed risk assessments for all play areas, including outdoor activities. The nursery also provides a wide range of safe play resources and equipment for children, with all equipment and play items regularly checked by staff. The nursery also takes care to ensure individual children's healthy growth and development is well promoted. Staff key persons closely support individual children's welfare and work with parents to ensure children are happy and able to enjoy their activities. A good range of healthy foods and snacks are provided, and children benefit from regular planned learning projects, designed to support their awareness of foods and healthy eating. Children are also encouraged to try new food tastes as part of the nursery's range of activities.

A strong feature of the nursery's organisation and support for children's welfare is the provision of a bright and stimulating play environment. Separate learning areas are prepared for the different ages of children attending, with appropriately sized furniture and a choice of quiet and cosy places for children to sit and engage in small group activities. Much care is taken to provide a supportive environment for children. For example, the nursery has a well organised computer and information technology room, which can also be used for small group learning activities and individual tutoring sessions. The nursery has, in all of the play areas, a wide range of resources and learning materials, that are well designed to engage children's interest. Most notable is the extensive range of role play resources and opportunities provided, where children can frequently enjoy being expressive and inventive. Much physical development is also successfully supported with the play environment. For example, children particularly enjoy using the nursery's well resourced soft-play room where they can be active indoors, and engage in learning that includes balance skills and expressive play. A notable feature of the nursery's play environment is the establishment of a sensory garden in the outdoor area. Here children can touch and smell different types of plants and herbs and be introduced to how things grow. This section of the outdoor area can also be used for small group activities, like hunting for mini-beats and learning about weather

and the seasons.

A definite outstanding element of the nursery's provision, is the considerable skill shown in promoting children's enjoying and achieving. Staff are highly consistent in ensuring children's own thoughts and ideas are well included in the activities. For example, a recent large-scale learning project on textures, presented children with a wide range of tactile experiences and ended with them making their own tactile environment. Children greatly benefited from this exercise, learning how to combine materials and explore many types of textures. Children also have many opportunities to read with staff, and develop a good interest in books and stories. Much advanced role play is also featured within the children's own play, particularly when outdoors. For example, the children have devised their own role play version of cats and dogs, taking turns pretending to be owners and their pets. Children are also encouraged to make good use of a wide range of outdoor play equipment and resources. For example, as part of the summer play-scheme activities, a camping project with associated activities was set up, with real tents and a supervised barbecue.

The nursery staff demonstrate much confidence in managing children's behaviour, and successfully help children learn to share and have a positive attitudes to those around them. Children also successfully learn to be part of a group and are encouraged to be confident talkers and listeners. The nursery staff play a part in supporting children's involvement in the wider community, and children's awareness of diversity is also effectively supported at the nursery; with many festivals and world awareness learning projects organised.

The nursery has a significant strength in its ability to work with children with disabilities. Staff have much experience of working with children with a range of educational concerns, and staff have also developed some considerable expertise with identifying developmental delay in children. The nursery also has close links with a number of outside care and support agencies, and staff show good skill with encouraging children's speech and communication. Overall, the nursery's support for individual children is highly organised, with much close liaison between key persons, and their parents, ensuring children's welfare and healthy development is well maintained.

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?	1
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	1
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	1

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	1
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?	1
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	1
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1

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