

# Little Explorers Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Inspection date</b>	01/10/2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Moira Oliver
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<b>Type of setting</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## 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*.

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## **Description of the setting**

Little Explorers was registered in 2009 and operates from a single story barn conversion. The nursery is located in Pakenham, a rural area near Bury St Edmunds, and the children attending come from a very wide catchment area. The nursery is open each weekday from 8.00am until 6.00pm and only closes during the Christmas week and Bank Holidays. The nursery is registered for a maximum of 30 children aged under eight years and there are 28 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age range. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area and there is level access to the premises.

The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They employ eight members of staff including the manager who is an early years teacher. The deputy has just started her Level 4 qualification, one room leader has an Early Childhood Studies Degree and the other has just completed the first year of a Foundation Degree. The four remaining staff are working towards a Level 3 in Child Care, Learning and Development. The group are in receipt of early education funding and have support from the local authority.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children thrive in the bright and stimulating learning environment and progress well through the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are happy, confident and enjoy their time at the nursery. Partnership with parents contributes significantly to ensuring children settle well and their individual needs are met. Strong leadership and extremely effective systems to support the staff to evaluate and reflect on their practice, provide a strong basis for their capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

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

- further promote positive attitudes to diversity through activities that encourage children to talk about similarities and difference and the reasons for those, helping children to learn to value aspects of their own and other people's lives
- further develop links with other early years settings to enhance progression and continuity of care.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Children are protected by the staff's secure knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. A number of staff have completed training

in safeguarding and are aware of the inter-agency links in place to protect children. All the staff have been employed through the robust recruitment and checking procedures and relevant documentation is held on file. Clear and effective policies and procedures ensure that children are cared for appropriately in a safe and secure environment. Staff carry out rigorous daily checks to ensure the premises, toys and equipment are safe and suitable for their purpose.

The staff and manager work very well as a team and have a clear idea about what they want to achieve within the setting. They are dedicated to their roles and have worked extremely hard over the past seven months, implementing a number of changes which have resulted in improved learning opportunities for the children. The staff are involved in all the changes and each have their individual areas of responsibility which they are developing through training and reading. Staff and parents are involved in the setting's self-evaluation process, using questionnaires and discussions. Staff appraisals provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and develop their areas of interest. Regular staff meetings are a valuable opportunity for staff to feedback on any training workshops attended ensuring ideas and techniques learnt can be used and developed in their practice.

Partnership with parents is a key strength. Parents receive clearly presented information about the setting when their child starts. They are well informed about the Early Years Foundation Stage through information and posters around the nursery, discussions and consultations with staff. Parents find the daily diaries a valuable two-way process to share information and the nursery's 'open door policy' ensures staff are always available to discuss matters further. Parents are invited to contribute to their child's achievement records using sticky labels to record significant achievement at home. They have many formal and informal opportunities to go through the records with their child's key person. Parents are encouraged to share their ideas and views about the setting. For example, they are invited to provide ideas for the menus and questionnaires provide opportunities for them to reflect and comment on all areas of the care and education provided. Feedback from the parents is valued and addressed, resulting in improvements such as the safety of the outside gate. Children take turns to take home Bertie Bear and his box of resources. Parents complete a diary of events that Bertie shared with their families, including photographs of him with their child on visits and in their homes, playing an active role nursery and home links.

Partnerships with other agencies are in place and staff value the input from other professionals. Staff are beginning to develop links with other settings that the children attend and to support transitions into schools, to encourage a closer liaison regarding children's development. Staff have found this difficult due to the very wide catchment area that the children come from and the amount of settings involved. However, this has been identified as an area for improvement to aid progression, transitions and continuity of care.

Resources and staff are deployed very effectively in the setting. Each age group has their own room and the open layout enables them to see each other in their respective rooms as they move around and access the garden. Staff manage the free-flow play system well, ensuring high levels of supervision both indoors and out. The rooms are divided into designated areas and children access the toys and

play equipment from well presented, low-level, transparent storage containers. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of diversity and offer an inclusive and welcoming environment. Some resources reflect diversity and encourage discussions about similarities and differences and displays of words and numbers in a range of languages create a sense of value and belonging. However, this area has been identified as needing further improvement to ensure they make the most of diversity to help children understand and value the society they live in.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

Children are confident, happy and have fun in the rich and stimulating learning environment. They have built trusting relationships with all the staff and formed close bonds with their key person. The key person system works very well; staff obtain clear and detailed information from the parents about their child's home routines, likes and interests and use these to establish each child's starting points and as a base for individual planning. Observation and assessment records have developed and clearly show progression, identifying children's next steps in their learning and development enabling staff to plan for individual children. The children receive a balance of planned and child-initiated play experiences which provide challenge and enjoyment. For example, babies explore items hidden in shredded paper and regularly access messy activities such as gloop, paint and wet and dry sand.

Children settle well, they are supported by their key person and having their own name cards and pegs provides a sense of belonging. They are supported well through transition times, moving from the Acorn Room to the Oak Room. For example, a familiar member of staff accompanies the child for short periods over a space of a few days, weeks or months, until they are confident and familiar with their new environment and have built relationships with their new key person. Children are becoming independent as they pour their own drinks, collect their own cutlery and serve themselves at meal times. They take pride in their environment as they tidy up the toys, putting them away in their relevant containers. Babies are beginning to express their own independence as they insist on feeding themselves with their hands or a spoon.

Children's language development is supported well. Babies' attempts to communicate are encouraged as the staff chat to them, smile and sing. They offer new experiences and textures through treasure baskets which the children delight in exploring. Older children chat freely to each other and the staff and are introduced to new descriptive vocabulary through exciting activities such as hiding play insects in cold spaghetti. They enjoy books and stories and delight in joining in with familiar stories using puppets and other props. Children enjoy mark making and make letter-like shapes as they walk round with notepads, listing items to buy from the shop. They take part in number rhymes, using their fingers to add and subtract. They match objects by colour as they throw balls and bean bags in the relevant coloured hoop. Children delight in rolling over soft-play blocks as they stack them and make a rocket to visit the moon. Staff challenge the older children asking questions to encourage them to problem solve as they construct the rocket,

ensuring it is big enough for them and their friends.

Children have good opportunities to learn about their local environment as they go for walks in the countryside to look at farm animals, pond life, farm machinery and notice the changing of the seasons and weather. Local fire officers have been recent visitors to the nursery as they were invited with their fire engine and fire fighting equipment. Children re-visit the day as they share photographs and express themselves in role play in the fire station they have made, complete with boots, hats, hoses, extinguishers, masks and a cardboard engine that they all took part in constructing.

Children develop a good understanding of how to contribute to their own health through regular hand washing routines and discussions about healthy eating. They are encouraged to try a variety of healthy, home-cooked foods and have a choice of fruits at snack times. The staff act as positive role models when carrying out hygiene routines such as nappy changing and consistently remind children to wash their hands using soap. Children are supported to develop their physical skills. Babies are encouraged to reach out for toys and crawl as they explore their indoor and outdoor environments. They use the table and chairs to pull themselves up to standing and to support them as they take a few steps. Older children enjoy being physically active as they climb the slide, peddle bikes and scoot along in cars, skilfully negotiating their way around other children. They use a range of items to make obstacle courses when they balance on boards and crawl through tunnels. Children learn to keep themselves safe as they are supported to use the slide and other play equipment safely. They take part in regular fire drills, have discussions about road safety and learn how to keep safe on outings.

The staff use age-appropriate, consistent strategies to support children to manage their own behaviour, children behave well and know what is expected of them. The staff treat each child with respect and value them as individuals providing positive role models for the children. They play games to encourage turn taking and effectively use a sand timer to support children to share. Babies have their individual needs met as they follow their home routines of sleeping, playing and eating. They bring their own comforters from home and enjoy cuddles and affection from the staff.

## 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*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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