

Whipper-snappers Day Care Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	402288
Inspection date	25/08/2009
Inspector	Moira Oliver
Setting address	Felmoor Farm, Braintree Road, Felsted, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 3EF
Telephone number	01371 821131
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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

Whipper-snappers Day Care Nursery is a privately owned nursery and out of school provision. It opened in 1994 and operates from four converted barn buildings in a rural location on the outskirts of Felsted, near Great Dunmow, Essex. All children have access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas. There is level access to three of the barns and the other has one small step.

The provision is open each weekday from 7.45am to 6.15pm for 51 weeks of the year. A maximum of 110 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 151 children aged under 8 years on roll and of these, 113 are in the early years age group. The setting is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery receives funding for nursery education and supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 24 staff to work directly with the children, all staff, including the owners, hold early years qualifications. One of the owners has a BA (Hons) degree in Early Years Management and five staff are working towards a higher qualification. The nursery also employs a cook, an assistant cook, a caretaker, a cleaner, and an administrator.

The nursery receives support from the local authority and obtained the 'Investors in People Award' for second time running in 2008. They are also members of the National Day Nursery Association.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding. The setting is highly effective in ensuring children progress in all areas of learning and development. The environment is created to provide a stimulating, welcoming and inviting place where children have fun as they learn through play both indoors and out. There is a strong culture of reflective practice and extremely effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the provision which leads to continuous improvement. Children are safe and healthy and their dietary needs are met exceptionally well through balanced and nutritious meals and snacks. Partnership with parents and most other providers is a key strength, ensuring children's needs are met.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop partnership working further by increasing links with other early years provisions that the children attend to ensure progression and continuity of care.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The owners and the staff have exceptionally high aspirations for quality which is evident through ongoing improvement. Self evaluation is a key strength as clear systems support managers and staff to reflect on their practice and plan to improve the outcomes for children. The well motivated team are keen to try out new ideas, learn from others and they take pride in their achievements. They are valued as individuals each bringing their own skills to the nursery to benefit the children. They are highly qualified and monthly monitoring ensures that they are listened to and their personal and professional developmental is addressed and supported.

The provision is significantly enhanced by the policies, procedures and practices that are implemented consistently throughout the nursery. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure children are cared for by suitable staff who are aware of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. Thorough risk assessments are carried out yearly in each area of the nursery and are added to when necessary. For example, a new risk assessment was drawn up for a new climbing frame which was checked over by the caretaker before the children had access to it, ensuring it was safe for the children to use. The staff are vigilant, the premises are safe and secure and children cannot leave them unsupervised.

The owners and staff value the important role that the parents play in their child's progress and actively encourage all contributions and information. Parents are encouraged to take home sensory boxes and library books and to provide photographs of their children using them as well as any observations. These photographs and observations become part of their child's profile, providing a wider picture of the child's progress. Parents evenings provide valuable information about the Early Years Foundation Stage and opportunities to ask questions and to discuss their child's profiles in detail. The nursery has built links with all of the schools that they feed into and the teachers come to visit the children helping them to settle at school. Staff also work closely with support staff from the local authority and the National Day Nursery Association, supporting them with their practice and also work with other professionals that are involved with the children. However, some children attend other early years settings that the nursery do not have any links with, therefore limiting opportunities to work in partnership.

Parents speak very highly of the nursery and the staff, they find the staff warm, friendly and approachable. They are very happy with the care and education their children receive and report that their children have fun, love attending and have gained confidence. The key person system works extremely well, staff get to know their key child and family well and strong bonds are built.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children flourish in the stimulating indoor and outdoor environment and as a result they make significant gains in their learning. They are happy, confident and settle well, building close relationships with the staff and their peers. Children are

motivated to learn and involved in planning their environment, for example, making a 'bug hotel' and dens to play in. They are active, inquisitive, independent learners, moving freely around all areas, both indoors and out, accessing toys and equipment. They involve the staff and other children in their play and go to staff when they need reassurance or comfort. Children have a strong sense of belonging as they each have their own book about themselves which parents and staff provide photographs for. These books are available at all times for children to share with each other and the staff.

Children are becoming skilled communicators. Babies engage the staff with smiles and make sounds which the staff respond to encouraging more. Staff work closely with parents and learn 'baby signing' and signs are displayed on the wall to support staff with this area of communication. Staff learn a few key words in other languages to support children who speak English as an additional language and they use photographs of activities and routines to support children who do not yet use language fluently. Children chat to the staff as they play and older or more able children use descriptive language to express themselves as staff introduce new words as they discover a range of insects. Children of all ages are developing a love of books and stories and enjoy sharing books with an adult or their peers. Children enjoy a wide range of books which include additional ones from the library van and inviting story areas are set up outdoors as well as indoors, ensuring books are always available. Children confidently use mathematical language as they compare shape and size and measure the distance their truck rolls down the hill marking each one with a brick. They enjoy number rhymes and use fingers to count and older children can match numbers, for example, parking their bike in the corresponding parking bay. Children happily explore their environment and love the outdoors and the changing of the seasons. They enjoy playing in the mud and snow and collect sticks and leaves to make dens. They learn about their own and other cultures as they celebrate festivals throughout the year and discuss similarities and difference through self portraits. They explore the local and wider community as they go for walks around the farm and the village and visit places of interest such as the forest. From a very young age children take part in growing and caring for plants and love digging in the soil and watering it.

Children are creative and express themselves through role play and with a range of painting, printing, sticking materials as well as corn-flour play, dough, shaving foam and bubbles. The nursery staff have a high interest in heuristic play and use real items with a range of textures in all rooms providing lots of different feels, tastes and smells to explore using all the senses. Sensory areas in the garden and well created resource boxes also engage children to use all their senses. Physical development is well catered for and children have many opportunities to develop their climbing, balancing, crawling, jumping, running, walking, scooting and peddling skills. They carry milk crates, tyres and logs and design areas to climb, balance and stack. They use small items and tools such as spoons, knives and forks at meal times and scissors, pens, chalks and pencils for mark-making, developing their fine motor skills.

Observation and assessment is thorough and involves the children, staff and parents. Valuable, detailed profiles are created using photographs, observations and assessments identifying the children's next step in their learning. Planning is

individual and responds to individual children's interests, highlighting the uniqueness of each child.

Children's welfare is promoted very well. They learn to keep themselves healthy through a variety of balanced nutritious meals and snacks. Meals are home cooked; the vegetables bought from local organic suppliers and the meat is specially prepared for the children by the local butcher. The cook takes pride in her kitchen and works with outside agencies such as the Trading Standards to take part in a nutrition analysis to improve her high quality menus further. Children learn to keep themselves safe as activities are provided where serious injury is reduced, but creativity, challenge and excitement are maintained. For example, children enjoy making dens with branches and sticks and balancing on stacked crates and tyres, enabling children to take risks and grow more alert to potential danger.

The setting provides a relaxed, calm environment where children are valued and behave well. They understand what is expected of them and staff use appropriate and consistent strategies to promote positive behaviour.

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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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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