



## Leapfrog Day Nursery - Chelmsford

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	650090
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 September 2005
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<b>Registered person</b>	Leapfrog Day Nurseries (Trading) Ltd
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Leapfrog Day Nursery, Chelmsford is part of a national chain of settings under the ownership of Nord Anglia. It opened in 2001 and operates from a purpose built single storey unit in Chelmsford, Essex. A maximum of 99 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:00 to 19:00 all year round. All

children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 142 children aged from birth to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider community. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 27 staff. Fifteen of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Eight staff are working towards a qualification.

The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is inadequate.

Children are generally cared for in a clean and tidy environment, however carpets are in need of repair or cleaning, particularly in the baby area, and some rooms are in need of redecoration. Ventilation is an issue throughout the nursery; few windows are opened to allow fresh air to circulate resulting in a stuffy atmosphere in some parts of the nursery.

Children receive support and guidance from staff to help them develop good hygiene practices e.g. staff talk to babies and children in the 'first steps' room about washing hands after they have changed nappies. Children are kept healthy by staff's following of clear hygiene routines, such as removing their tabards when taking a child into the changing area, and using plastic aprons and gloves.

Babies have their nappies changed on an individual basis, as and when needed; the changing area is accessed by going through another room used by the more mobile babies and means that at many times during the day, one of the members of staff is out of the main baby room. Nappy changing times are clearly recorded in documentation which is shared with parents.

Children's dietary needs are met; the nursery provides regular meals and snacks throughout the day. Babies have their food cut up or mashed according to their stage of development; there is little evidence of wholesome, natural food being provided, for example fresh fruit and vegetables at each meal and snack time.

Older children have little choice over the quantity or content of their meals; they are served by staff. Children's special dietary needs are well understood and known to all staff who endeavour to ensure that no child is offered unsuitable foods.

Babies' milk feeds are prepared in advance by parents and clearly labelled with the child's name and date. The correct feeds are given to each baby; staff use a double checking system prior to feeding babies. Babies are held close in the arms of staff as they are bottle-fed, staff sit in the comfortable rocking chair, or on the sofa.

Babies have access to fresh air in the well-presented garden. Less mobile children go for walks around the garden in the nursery buggies, whilst more mobile children enjoy running around the grassed and hard-surfaced areas. Although children benefit from fresh air, there appears to be little direction to their outdoor play and a lack of suitable small equipment to aid all round physical development. Not all children in the baby unit can access the outdoor area together as there are insufficient buggies to allow them to be outside together. This causes a conflict of interest as staff organise how they are able to take the children outside during their designated time slots.

Toddlers enjoy free play in the garden during their allotted time slots, and use the climbing equipment and wheeled toys to good effect. They enjoy a parachute for group activities. There is a lack of small equipment such as balls and bean bags to develop throwing and catching skills.

Children who show signs of being unwell are looked after as they wait to be taken home by their parents, thus helping to keep the nursery infection free. Children have access to tissues and wipes and staff are quick to use these to keep hands, noses and faces clean and germ-free.

Toddlers have plenty of choice of activity and free movement throughout the spacious, well-equipped unit, as well as regular, if short, sessions of outdoor play. All children use the sensory room on a rota basis and enjoy the colours and sounds they experience there.

Pre-school children also have pre-determined access to the outside area and enjoy the climbing equipment and wheeled toys, as well as occasional planting and growing activities. These are sometimes limited due to lack of resources and planned activities are on occasion abandoned. The strict timetabling results in no opportunities for free-flow, spontaneous play and in fact the outdoor area remains unused for large parts of the day, therefore is a wasted resource.

Children have access to a limited range of tools and equipment to promote fine motor skills. In particular, resources for writing are in poor condition, with all pencils in need of sharpening and unusable pens left in the box.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe environment; visitors are monitored by the office assistant or manager at the secure front door. Some parents have electronic keys.

Very young children play safely; staff are vigilant about keeping the play areas clear. Furniture is placed around the edges of the room, leaving a clear floor space. Babies are appropriately grouped to ensure that more mobile children are cared for separately and therefore do not pose a hazard to very young babies who are beginning to explore their environment by crawling and rolling around the floor.

Children aged under three experience use of suitable toys and play materials, which are stored in boxes on the floor for easy access. The range is however very limited

and unimaginative with regard to natural objects and materials to develop sensory and exploratory play and allow children to investigate the world; one small box of 'treasures' is available for the young babies.

Children are protected from potential harm by the nursery's policies and procedures on child protection; staff are aware of the procedures to follow and deal with concerns appropriately as they arise. Parents are aware of the nursery's responsibilities regarding child protection.

Children generally have sufficient furniture and equipment to meet their needs, travel cots are available for older babies if the full-sized cots are all in use. Toddlers who wish to sleep have floor mats with their own bedding. As mentioned, babies have to share the available buggies to be taken for a walk in the fresh air.

Children's work is used to good effect to create attractive wall displays in most areas of the nursery. These add colour and interest to the environment, but there are few hands-on or interactive displays whereby children can handle objects and investigate items either made or from the natural world.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies have access to a range of toys and activities throughout the day to support their overall development. They show interest in the brightly coloured toys which are set out for them and independently explore the resources. They express pleasure in the toys which make noises.

Babies participate in creative and messy play, although the painting activities are often adult-led and have a pre-determined outcome. Photographs show babies engaging in messy play and exploring textures and colours, demonstrating how they thoroughly enjoy the experience.

All children regularly access the sensory room, or 'bubbles' as the children in the first steps room shout excitedly. This provides a change of environment and stimulates the visual, tactile and auditory senses.

Babies are encouraged to develop language skills; staff respond to the babies' babbles and gurgles in an enthusiastic and fun manner. The large number of babies cared for in one space sometimes causes the noise level to be very high and means staff are unable to respond to babies before they become disinterested or frustrated.

Toddlers enjoy a spacious area within the nursery and freely access a range of equipment to allow them to develop and explore. The introduction of planned activities in response to the introduction of the 'Birth to three matters' framework has been largely positive and staff are now refining the planning to ensure all areas of development are covered during the week.

Toddlers are enthused by staff's obvious enjoyment of activities such as singing and dancing and respond with glee.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

Children in the pre-school room follow a planned curriculum based on the early learning goals. The planning is complex and not fully understood by all staff, with the result that it is not always clear what children are expected to learn, and activities are not always challenging or extending for able children.

Teaching methods are varied and of mixed quality, with some missed opportunities for making the most of activities, such as the letter of the week. There is little spontaneous, child-initiated learning or promoting children's individual development.

Support is in place for children with special needs and outside help is available when needed.

Children generally behave well although poor organisation results in much unproductive time as children wait for adults to be ready for the next activity or routine. Some children appear disengaged and bored, and behaviour deteriorates, when in a room for prolonged periods with too little stimulating play equipment to arouse their interest and provide sustained play opportunities.

Children's developmental records are haphazardly completed and in some cases contain very few observations or records of children's achievements. In all cases, no indication of the next steps in learning are available. Activities are not evaluated systematically as staff are insecure in their understanding of what the children are meant to achieve, so no record of children's participation is used to inform the record keeping.

Children use a 'writing corner' to freely make marks and develop, however, resources are poor and not monitored. They have a one to one writing practise once a week, but few opportunities to write for different purposes, or in different areas of the nursery. Children make good use of the books and read for pleasure, retelling stories using 'story language'.

Maths equipment is available for sorting, weighing and exploring shape and space. However planned activities lack focus and are not sufficiently challenging to develop children's problem-solving skills.

Children have limited first hand opportunities to explore and investigate objects and living things. There is a computer in the playroom but it was not working during the two days of the inspection. Children take part in celebrations of festivals and have some images of children from different cultures.

Children's creative development is encouraged as they explore textures and colours, for instance using shaving foam or play dough, however, many art and craft activities are adult-directed and have a pre-determined outcome, so imaginative development is limited. Role play provides children with props and costumes, and children respond well when staff take an active part in developing the play; at other times, when less well supervised, they use the props as weapons and chase one another.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies and very young children are happy and confident to be left by their parents and they form good relationships with staff. Their emotional needs are well met by caring, affectionate staff, who cuddle babies both when they are distressed and generally throughout their nursery day.

Babies follow individual care routines as shared by the parents on entry to the nursery. Documentation shared with parents clearly shows the babies' nappy-changing, feeding and sleeping patterns, providing reassurance for parents. Babies are cared for by staff who are beginning to develop their skills with regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have the relevant documentation and have introduced a system of planning which is still being refined.

Toddlers also benefit from warm and friendly relations with staff. They confidently approach adults to have their needs met and are happy and secure, enabling them to join in with all activities enthusiastically. They understand routines and develop independence as they choose from among the toys and activities set out by staff. Behaviour is good and staff understand and respond to the range of behaviours presented, showing understanding of children's developmental stages.

Children aged under three years have limited resources reflecting positive images of diversity, or activities to promote such awareness.

Pre-school children have a sense of belonging and proudly display their uniform tee shirts. Again, behaviour is generally good when children are engaged; they understand routines and respond well to staff. They help to tidy up and are independent in self care, putting on coats to play outside and using the toilet independently, remembering to wash their hands.

Children show consideration for others' feelings and are able to share resources and take turns when playing a board game. Children join in a group discussion about the weather and put forward their ideas about puddles and why they disappear when the sun comes out. They are able to listen attentively and contribute to conversations meaningfully.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory.

Parents are kept informed about daily events and changes at the nursery. A notice board contains information, some of which is out of date or no longer relevant. Staff make a point of talking to parents when they deliver and collect children; this verbal exchange of information is welcomed.

Children's developmental records are shared with parents at the twice yearly parents evenings. Children in pre-school have a record based on the stepping stones to show their progress towards the early learning goals. These records are poorly completed and do not give a full or up to date picture of what children can do and what they need to do next. Staff make little effort to involve parents in children's learning.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Children learn about their own and other cultures through seasonal festivals, both religious and secular. They are taught to be kind and thoughtful and respect the wishes and feelings of others.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

Overall the needs of the children are not met.

All staff are checked and vetted for their suitability to work with children. Trainees and students on placement are supervised by qualified staff.

Children are cared for with the correct ratios of staff for their age group. On the occasions when baby room staff have to leave the room to change nappies there could be times when ratios are not met, therefore the organisation of this practice needs reviewing.

The organisation of routines, space and resources is satisfactory for the toddlers. They have spacious rooms with designated areas for messy play, sleeping and eating and easy access to toilets and wash basins. Outside access is limited to set times.

Organisation in the pre-school room is not child-centred but largely based on adult routines. This results in children waiting and being simply occupied or contained whilst they wait for the next activity, routine or meal time. During these times they are not using resources to learn or stimulate the senses. Staff are unimaginative and simply control the children, not offering worthwhile, stimulating activities which would benefit children.

Documentation and paperwork to support children's welfare and development is in place and confidentially stored.

Leadership and management is inadequate.

Management have not addressed recommendations arising from the previous inspection, therefore these issues will be carried over as actions following this inspection.

Management do not monitor the organisation or standards of care and education, this results in staff having little motivation or guidance to structure the environment in a way that enables children to most benefit from the available space, activities and resources.

There is too little action on identified weaknesses, such as the lack of core resources, staff's limited knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how they implement planning.

Children's records are not maintained in a meaningful way due to lack of



consideration by management on how this can be achieved.

Staff training and development needs are not considered sufficiently, the appraisal system has been suspended.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the nursery was asked to ensure that sufficient play materials and resources, particularly to raise multicultural awareness, is made available for children. The recommendation has been met in part but there are still many gaps in provision, for example natural materials for babies and toddlers, sand and water play for the pre-school children, small equipment for outside play, such as balls and hoops, and multicultural images in the baby rooms.

The nursery was asked to review the arrangements for nappy-changing in the baby area. This has not been addressed.

The nursery was asked to review arrangements and timing of snack time to ensure that all children's needs are met. Snack times have been reviewed and now meet children's needs satisfactorily.

The nursery was asked to ensure that a complaint log is kept of all concerns raised by parents; this is now in place.

The improvements made go towards enhancing children's care and welfare, however, some issues are still to be addressed satisfactorily.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been two complaints since the last inspection.

In February 2005 Ofsted investigated a concern in relation to Standard 12: working in partnership with parents, with regard to the amount of information given to parents about a child's illness. Ofsted asked the provider to investigate and report back within ten working days. The provider reported back on the company policies and procedures regarding sharing information with parents but also on respecting confidentiality where individual children and families may be concerned. Ofsted is satisfied that the provider was meeting requirements and the provider remained qualified for registration.

In June 2005 concerns were raised regarding staff ratios and deployment, temperature of the setting, security and communication with parents. These relate to Standards 2: organisation; 4: physical environment; 6: safety and 12: working in partnership with parents and carers. Ofsted investigated these concerns by carrying out an unannounced visit on 05/08/05. The setting was found to be meeting the standards in relation to most aspects of the complaint. Some risks in relation to uncovered electrical sockets, furniture repair and some toys for children aged under two years were noted by inspectors, and they found that Ofsted had not been informed of all staff that had left. Two actions were raised in relation to these issues.

A recommendation was made to ensure the complaint log was updated to include a record of concerns raised by parents.

A satisfactory response to the actions was received. The provider remained qualified for registration

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### WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

#### The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- plan and provide a suitable range of activities and resources for children, which are appropriate for their stage of development and based on their individual needs. Extend opportunities for children, including babies, to experience a wider range of materials and objects including natural materials and household objects to develop the senses
- review the organisation of resources and procedures to improve routine care in the baby room, particularly with regard to nappy changing.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

#### The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- review organisation, staff deployment and use of time and resources to maximise productive time for children. Reduce non-productive time for children as they wait for adults to prepare and present activities or organise daily routines. Ensure that children's records are updated regularly to show what they have achieved and what they need to do next
- ensure that children have access to a wide range of equipment and play materials in sufficient quantities to encourage development in all areas, including mark-making (particularly writing for different purposes), creative,

technology and physical development (particularly fine motor skills).

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)