



Chestnut House Kindergarten Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY301874
Inspection date	31 October 2005
Inspector	Susan Elizabeth Warren
Setting Address	45 Mill Road, Mile End, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5LE
Telephone number	01206 838900
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Registered person	Chestnut House Kindergarten Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Chestnut House Kindergarten Ltd is one of a small group of nurseries run by private owners. It opened in 2005 and operates from purpose built premises in Colchester, Essex. A maximum of 88 children may attend the kindergarten at any one time. The kindergarten is open each weekday from 08:30 to 15:00 for 46 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 67 children from birth to 5 years on roll. Of these 16 children

receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area and surrounding villages. The kindergarten currently supports a number of children with special educational needs.

The kindergarten employs 15 staff. All staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a recognised early years qualification. The kindergarten receives support from the Local Authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health and wellbeing is ensured by the kindergarten's meticulous attention to all details regarding health, hygiene, food and drink. Children's needs, both medical and dietary are well known and communicated to all staff effectively. Children bring packed lunches which are stored, individually plated, in refrigerated conditions until required. Children having a hot meal have food sent from home prepared in one of the two well equipped and well managed kitchens. Babies' feeds are prepared and carefully monitored. All children's food intake is recorded and the details shared with parents daily. They enjoy healthy and varied snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables, each day and drinks are available as needed throughout the day.

Children's routines include handwashing after messy play and before eating. They are helped to understand why this is important for good health. They take and use tissues and dispose of them in the bins provided.

Children are cared for in a clean and hygienic environment; staff follow appropriate procedures when attending to children's personal needs and when changing nappies. Children requiring medication have the doses recorded and signed off by a parent or carer. Their first aid needs are met by staff who have the benefit of in-house training, first aid boxes are available at several places within the kindergarten.

Children who become poorly are kept comfortable until a parent or carer can collect them. Children are kept safe from the spread of infection by the kindergarten's policy of excluding children who have infectious conditions until danger of contagion has passed.

Children of all ages enjoy physical play in the outside area whenever weather permits; spare boots and coats are available to ensure that children can play out even if wet underfoot. Activities help to develop physical skills as children use the fixed large equipment, wheeled toys and small equipment. They can run and move freely. Children have music and movement sessions indoors if unable to get outside and a range of soft play is available.

Children can choose play equipment and activities during free play times, enabling them to develop independence. Toys are stored in easy to access containers which

children can take and return independently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a very safe and secure environment. They are unable to leave the premises unseen and all visitors are screened by staff before being admitted. They are made welcome as they enter the kindergarten; displays and notices inform parents of anything relevant as well as general useful information about facilities and activities in the area.

Children's safety is further enhanced by well designed features such as stair gates and handrails on the stairs, wide corridors to allow easy movement about the building, ramps and safe access points to outside. High, solid wood fencing makes the garden safe and secure. Children's play rooms are spacious and all benefit from natural light and the provision of high quality furnishings and play equipment, chosen to promote children's safety, comfort and development for the different ages attending.

Children benefit from the excellently planned premises which have been designed with attached bathroom facilities including toilets, hand basins and changing facilities within every room. These are all extremely clean, well equipped and maintained to a very high standard whilst being child friendly and attractive.

Children take part in regular, recorded fire drills and staff are very aware of evacuation procedures. There are direct communication lines to the office staff so at any time assistance can be quickly summoned.

Children are further protected from potential harm by the staff's understanding of child protection procedures. Staff are well trained and confident in dealing with any concerns, and ensure that parents are aware of the nursery's responsibilities before children attend.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy a stimulating and exciting programme with a good balance of planned and free activities suited to their ages and stages of development. Children aged three and over follow a curriculum based on the Foundation Stage whilst those under three are planned for with the 'Birth to three matters' framework in mind. Their day includes active and quiet times, both free and guided play, and outdoor sessions to ensure an interesting day with contrasting elements. Children are cared for in a base room with all facilities contained either in the room or nearby. Children who wish to sleep or nap can do so on sleep mats or in cots as preferred; their personal individual needs are respected. Babies have spacious rooms to crawl or roll about; domestic style furniture encourages mobility in babies who are beginning to pull themselves to standing and cruise around the room.

Children have access to equipment and images depicting cultural diversity and enjoy celebration of festivals and cultural events as part of the programme. They can dress up and use the role play areas to begin to develop their understanding of how it feels to be a child from another culture. Imaginative displays provide tactile and visually stimulating material to encourage questioning and development of descriptive language, such as the enormous pumpkin and autumn themed displays in the front entrance.

All children have messy and creative play opportunities, including the babies. This enables them to enjoy sensory activities with no end product, simply enjoying the experience of different textures, smells, colours and sounds. They have access to a wide choice of manufactured and natural materials, and carefully chosen household items to stimulate the senses, explore and play freely with.

Children enjoy warm and friendly interaction with staff who have a very good understanding of the phases of development, enabling them to tailor the care to suit individual children. Babies are held close when feeding and made to feel secure and safe.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Staff demonstrate an excellent and very sound knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the Foundation Stage, including how children learn. This enables them to plan a broad and balanced programme of activities and play opportunities which help children make very good progress towards the early learning goals. Activities are individually tailored to children's differing needs and stages of development, and are therefore sufficiently challenging, encouraging children to think and solve problems. The sessions are well paced and include a wide range of teaching styles to appeal to all children. There are times for quiet reflection and relaxation, making a balanced day.

Children needing additional help are identified and have specially prepared activities developed to allow them to make all round progress at their own pace. Staff manage children's behaviour well; they gently remind children of ways to keep harmony and be aware of one another's feelings.

Use of time and resources is very good. Staff have devised their own timetables and are able to be flexible if spontaneous learning opportunities arise, such as watching a thunderstorm or experiencing snow.

A very well developed system of assessment builds into a clear picture of children's achievements and shows what they need to do to progress onto the next stage. Staff use a system which details the stepping stones and includes evidence of how children are seen to have achieved, or are working towards, each element.

Children show perseverance and are able to complete tasks effectively, adding to their sense of achievement and building self esteem. They like to talk about their models and drawings and chat about home and family events as they play and work.

Mealtimes and snack times are relaxed and family style, with tables set out nicely so children feel a sense of occasion. They respond by behaving in a controlled and confident way, enjoying their food and conversing happily with friends and staff who sit with them.

Children become competent speakers and listeners as they take part in activities designed to help them develop these key literacy skills. As they approach school starting age, or when they show readiness, they have more structured tuition to introduce them to letter sounds and pre-reading skills. Children write for different purposes during role play and when completing topic work. They enjoy books and stories as part of the daily routines.

Mathematical skills and concepts are developed through free play with mathematical equipment for sorting and grading. Puzzles and construction kits introduce concepts of shape and space in fun and meaningful ways. Staff use daily routines to introduce problem solving and early calculation skills, as children help to give out cups and share fruit and biscuits. Sand, water and other materials provide opportunities to explore concepts of weight and measurement.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed through the topics and everyday activities involving role play with domestic items and technology such as compact disc players, digital cameras and play appliances. Children become competent at basic information technology skills and can use a mouse and keyboard with increasing skill to complete a range of programmes. Visitors to the nursery, such as a veterinary nurse, demonstrate their skills and show children how they work with animals and in the caring professions. Children can use magnifiers to examine bugs and items from nature that they discover in the garden. Children and parents enjoy a trip to the zoo in the summer and can look at the photographs afterwards to recall the event.

Physical development is aided by use of the fixed large equipment in the garden, which children can use freely during outdoor sessions. They also have a range of smaller equipment to encourage catching and throwing skills, and wheeled toys to ride and steer. They use tools and mark making equipment to develop small muscle skills and are competent with cutlery and cooking implements. They pour carefully as they get their own drinks, or when filling containers at the sand and water trays.

Creative development is fostered by a programme of free and guided art and craft activities to introduce children to colour mixing and different media. They can paint, print and collage with no pre-determined end result, and express themselves through their creations. Found materials are used to make models which children can decorate as they wish. Music plays a part in the daily routine, with singing and use of instruments. Children explore rhythm and pitch and join in with songs both known and new. They have lively music and movement sessions especially when it is not possible to play outside due to inclement weather.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs are very well known to staff which enables care to be provided with children's best interests in mind, for example, their preferred styles of learning and play, feeding and sleeping patterns, and favourite stories and activities. Children's individual needs are considered at all times, which results in an outstanding degree of individualised care achieved by regular discussions with parents, and observing the children as they play and work.

Diversity is celebrated through a topic focus on world beliefs and religions and all the major festivals are covered as well as some less well known ones. Children have access to equipment and images depicting cultural diversity and enjoy celebration of festivals and cultural events as part of the programme. They can dress up and use the role play areas to begin to develop their understanding of how it feels to be a child from another culture. Imaginative displays provide tactile and visually stimulating material to encourage questioning and development of descriptive language, such as the enormous pumpkin and autumn themed displays in the front entrance.

All children are included and those needing additional help are sensitively provided for to allow them to access all aspects of the kindergarten day and make the best possible progress. Children receive help and guidance from outside professionals when needed and staff ensure that parents are kept informed and work closely with them.

Children develop a sense of identity in the setting as each room is named after a different bird which is represented by a soft toy. The birds are taken home by children who report on where they have been, for example on holiday, to the dentist, hospital or library. This is a popular activity and helps children feel that they are contributing to the life of the kindergarten as well as being a valuable and fun link between home and kindergarten.

Children are confident, relaxed, safe and secure within the setting. The family style groupings allow them to develop positive relationships with their peers and the staff caring for them. Their behaviour is exemplary as a result of staff's positive and clear management of the range of children's behaviour and their realistic expectations based on secure knowledge of child development.

The Partnership with Parents and Carers is outstanding.

Children's care and welfare is enhanced by the kindergarten's dedication to fostering a positive relationship with all parents and carers. Details are taken at registration and updated at frequent intervals, so staff are aware of all relevant information and changes affecting children. Parents are kept informed of all aspects of kindergarten life in a variety of ways; a prospectus details basic information about the setting and regular newsletters are produced and circulated. Notice boards are present throughout the kindergarten, attached to each room, and are updated to show staff, activities and events and useful references for local sources of help and advice on childcare, health and other relevant issues.

Parents can see children's developmental records and discuss their progress and any areas for concern with the key workers. This is available daily on an informal

basis but also at the pre-arranged appointment times during open sessions when all parents and carers are invited to see the kindergarten and try out activities for themselves. All children have a daily diary which is sent home; parents can add comments or information and this is used as a point of contact between key staff and home.

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

They are encouraged to be independent and to help one another. Children learn about their own and other cultures through topics and daily activities. They consider the consequences of their actions and how people might feel. Children form warm and friendly relationships with one another and the adults around them.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children are cared for by staff who have undergone all necessary checks to ensure they are suitable to work in the setting. Procedures ensure that no unvetted staff or volunteers have unsupervised access to children. There is a very high level of qualification amongst the staff team, and those attending training are well supported and integrated into all levels of the care and education programmes.

Children have a key worker appointed who is responsible for their day to day welfare and who keeps a record of development and liaises with parents to keep them informed and share information about the child. Ratios of staff to children exceed minimum requirements ensuring a high degree of personal attention for all children.

The rooms are all well appointed with high quality furniture and equipment, and good use is made of all the available space to give children a varied and interesting day, for example, children work in small groups in the teaching room or they may go upstairs to watch birds from the window or play outside to experience the changing seasons and enjoy fresh air.

All documentation is in place and maintained to a meticulously high standard. The kindergarten benefits from being part of an established group of settings under the same ownership, so good practice in terms of policies and procedures is shared amongst all practitioners within the group.

All documentation is stored confidentially in the central office near the main entrance. Staff have access to documents they require and ongoing daily records are kept in the rooms.

Leadership and management is outstanding.

There is a clear vision and ethos at the kindergarten which focuses on the personal development and achievement of each individual child. Staff are highly motivated and unfailingly enthusiastic; they bring ideas and influence the practice in a positive way, broadening and enriching the children's experiences. Staff feel valued and work extremely well as a team, they are committed to providing a high standard of care

and education. They are given time to complete paperwork and keep their records up to date. Every week a managers' meeting briefs room leaders on the week's activities and news, and staff met as a whole regularly and as smaller teams as needed. Staff take a pride in keeping the indoor and outside environment exciting, bright and colourful with children's work used to good effect to create displays.

There is an established, ongoing system of monitoring and evaluation and activities are discussed to decide whether they have been successful or not, a process which informs future planning. Staff's professional development needs are addressed through regular appraisals, a process in which they are fully involved and their views considered and valued. Staff are consulted about all aspects of the kindergarten and its day to day running and all have an opportunity to complete the Ofsted self evaluation form and discuss their views.

The manager has a firm belief in training as a way of keeping abreast of trends and developments and to raise standards to provide the best possible care and education for children and receives full support from the owners to work towards this vision. Staff attend frequent training days and courses and cascade their knowledge to others at staff meetings and utilise their knowledge in their care of the children.

There is a very good understanding of both strengths and areas which are to be developed, particularly as numbers of children attending increase.

Overall, the range of children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report since registration.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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