



Offerton Farm Nursery Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205227
Inspection date	28 March 2006
Inspector	Anne Georgina Phillips / Rebecca Hadley
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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

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Offerton Farm Nursery Group opened in 1996. It operates from 13 rooms in converted farm buildings in a rural location between Droitwich and Worcester. The nursery serves the surrounding areas.

There are currently 142 children under eight years on roll. This includes 14 funded three-year-olds and 42 funded four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with special needs.

The nursery is registered to care for up to 135 children under 8 years at any one time. No more than 33 of these may be under 2 years. It opens five days a week for 48 weeks of the year with closed periods at Christmas and during part of the summer school holidays. Sessions are from 08:00 to 17:45 and presently include out of school care but this is being phased out.

There are 19 full time and 12 part time staff who work with the children. Of these, 15 have early years qualifications to NVQ Level 2 or 3. There are currently 8 staff working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and belongs to early years support group.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a generally clean and well kept environment. Their health is supported satisfactorily overall by the staff, most of whom have a secure knowledge of good health and hygiene procedures. Those who work with the youngest children implement them consistently well in order to protect children from infection. They are vigilant and respond quickly if children become unwell. Children are encouraged to develop hygienic practices when washing their hands before eating, after outdoor play and after using the toilet. But areas that the older children use are sometimes grubby and some adult hand washing facilities are not clean or in good working order.

Children are appropriately nourished. Their individual needs are known and respected, for example, details of allergies are accessible to staff and acted on by them when preparing meals or snacks. Food that children bring to the nursery is stored and reheated safely. Freshly cooked meals include vegetables and fruit. Those children that have nursery snacks have opportunities to try healthy foods such as raisins, breadsticks and some fruit but staff have identified that the variety and quantities of these could be improved. Break times are sociable and well-paced. Children now have ready access to their own drinks or water with extra available in hot weather or after active play.

Most children enjoy daily opportunities to be physically active and gain increasing control of their bodies. Older children play energetically outdoors in the covered outdoor area or visit the more challenging equipment in fine weather. Some children enjoy gym sessions. The youngest babies confidently gain control of their bodies with warm support and encouragement from staff. They are calm and secure when being held closely to enjoy a feed. The youngest toddlers enjoy lots of free space to develop their emerging skills and balance indoors, for example when chasing the bubbles, feeding themselves, painting, gluing and drawing. Opportunities for the youngest children to play outdoors and enjoy fresh air and exercise have been limited but should now be improved by the provision of some safety surfacing, and screens to protect children from the sun. All children are able to rest or relax when they are tired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally well cared for in a child friendly environment with attractive displays of children's work and good access to outdoor play in most areas. Children's safety and security is satisfactory overall. Staff working directly with the children supervise them well. For example, there are good vision panels in the baby areas so that children and adults can be clearly seen and sleeping children are frequently checked or continuously monitored. Risks of injury to children are assessed and reviewed regularly but these are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all have been identified and dealt with effectively. Systems for ensuring children cannot leave the premises are now appropriate with clear reminders to all staff, parents and visitors to ensure gates are secured but those for ensuring that a main entrance is not opened by parents are not always effective. Emergency evacuation procedures are known by all staff but these are not practised regularly. Staff are satisfactorily checked before having unsupervised access to children but checks have not been carried out on other persons living on the premises at the time of this inspection which places children at potential risk and is a breach of regulations.

Children use a varied range of good quality equipment which is sturdy, attractive to them and matches their developmental needs. The low level furniture and storage units encourage the younger children to make their own choices and develop independence. Toddlers are learning to care for their toys by readily helping to tidy them away. Generally toys and resources interest and involve children but those available to the youngest toddlers do not offer them sufficient challenge so that they quickly lose interest and eagerly look for a change of activity.

Children are adequately protected by staff who have an understanding of child protection procedures gained during childcare training. Child protection procedures are in place and all staff cover this at induction. However, few staff have an in-depth knowledge given the size of the establishment and staff are not clear who is the designated person in charge of child protection issues. There is a member of staff in each area with first aid training and accessible first aid boxes. A high proportion of staff have completed food safety training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are broadly content and settled. They enter the nursery readily and quickly settle to activities with other children. Most children make good progress because staff use their understanding of children's development to provide an appropriate range of practical play activities which involve and interest them. Babies enjoy warm cuddles and one to one interaction which promotes their sense of belonging and security. They are keen to communicate through actions and sounds and enjoy the colourful shakers. The youngest toddlers have lots of free space to build on their newly acquired walking and toddling skills. They enjoy watching and chasing the bubbles and doing messy activities such as gluing and exploring gloop. However the resources available to them are not always sufficiently challenging to stimulate them

and maximise their development. Two year olds concentrate well when sticking with small pieces of paper onto the fish shapes and enthusiastically scoop the sand into the buckets. They readily choose books to share with a friend or look at themselves. They are starting to play imaginatively with the dressing up clothes and the Duplo. They enjoy making hand and foot prints to make a wall display.

The children form friendly relationships with the staff but regular changes in keyworkers and personnel generally limits their sense of belonging and trust and could limit their confidence and self esteem.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make sufficient progress towards the areas of learning within the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, although some staff's knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals and the stepping stones is limited. They have not all attended training and some teaching methods are ineffective. Children are not challenged as the main focus activity is very much adult-led and their instigated play is not channelled or extended. Children are making limited progress in some areas.

The effectiveness of planning for all children is satisfactory, and links to the six areas of learning. However, there are very limited evaluations and assessments of the activities to identify whether the objectives are met or whether any further plans need to be made to enable children to progress through the stepping stones. These systems are not consistently used by the staff, and assessments are not used to inform the planning to enable children to move forward to the next stages in their learning.

Children are not extended in some of the areas of learning. They independently choose some of the activities during free-play, often instigating spontaneous activities either independently or in small groups. However, their learning is not extended during these times due to a lack of appropriate resources such as free painting and dressing up. At times some of the children are not interested in the activities available or get bored. For example during circle and story times. This leads to some disruption for others.

Children are beginning to develop self-care skills during daily hygiene routines and through topics. They are beginning to understand the importance of self-care as staff engage them in discussions concerning their hygiene routines. Most children are confident and know the day-to-day routines of the nursery. They interact positively with staff and their peers. Work is displayed and children are proud of their achievements. For example one child pointed to a picture she has displayed and said "I've done that all by myself".

Children's communication skills are not always fully extended as staff do not use effective questioning to develop their speech and language. They are not always encouraged to enjoy books and stories. For example, some children throw books around on the carpet. Some children's behaviour becomes boisterous and disruptive during this time.

Children have opportunities to explore and investigate in activities such as during sand play and construction times. However, they have limited access to resources for information communication and technology, such as the computer, to develop their skills and learning. They can talk about the weather such as sun and rain, and know what clothes they wear in different weathers. They look at how things grow and regularly enjoy trips around the farm to look at the animals and where they live.

Some children use their imagination in role-play. For example, children playing with dolls and pretending to be Cinderella. However, they had no access to dressing up as dressing up clothes were covered and the limited equipment set out in role play areas hinders children's development in this area. They have little opportunity to create their own paintings and drawings, as equipment is only available as part of planned activities and is very much adult-led with very little appropriate involvement by the children.

Children are learning to gain control of their bodies and move confidently around the nursery. They have opportunities for regular outdoor play and their physical skills are extended as they hop, crawl, balance and move like different animals such as a snake and a rabbit.

Children have some opportunities to make marks and some are beginning to form letters and write their names. However, at times they do not have access to the appropriate equipment such as paper to reinforce this. They use mathematics as part of their every-day activities. Older children are beginning to use numbers. They can count the number of children present and then clap the corresponding amount. However, their knowledge is not extended as staff miss several opportunities to reinforce counting during everyday routines such as cups at break time, when taking the register and when looking at books.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual needs are met overall. Staff take time to get to know each child and family finding out about their needs and parents wishes. There are daily opportunities to share information about children's needs but changes in keyworkers and staff can impact on the trust formed and children's sense of belonging and confidence. All children receive a warm welcome and some staff find innovative ways of helping very young children communicate, for example, by providing a picture at child height for a child to point to when wanting the toilet. Children's specific health needs are supported effectively, for example, the frequent application of creams or ointments if required. Some staff have learnt to do simple sign language to support children with special needs. Children have equal access to resources and do learn about some aspects of other cultures such as Chinese New Year but they see very few reflections of diversity in the resources they use.

Children make appropriate relationships with staff and each other. They generally behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Most staff act as good role models by giving explanations simply and clearly, for example, children learn the reasons why they should not throw sand. Children's work is valued

and displayed and they learn to respect their surroundings and by helping to keep it tidy. Children behaving well receive praise and encouragement.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. The setting holds parents open mornings where parents can talk about their child. Information is available for parents before their child starts and during their time at nursery through diaries and newsletter. However, they have limited information regarding the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Planning which is displayed for parents does not show areas of learning. They are occasionally asked to send in objects from home which relate to the theme, however, this is limited.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation is satisfactory. Children are broadly content and settled in the child friendly setting. Their needs are met through generally effective organisation. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of childcare and mostly take steps to protect children, promote their well-being and support their development. Staff develop appropriate relationships with parents to meet the individual needs of children overall but regular changes in key staff in some areas can disrupt communication, affect the continuity of care children receive and ultimately their experiences. Staff plan and organise developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities with some areas of good practice but these are not always sufficiently challenging to ensure that children can take the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The provider rarely assesses the nursery education. However, recent changes to daily management systems are addressing this situation. Senior staff are aware of the improvements which need to be implemented and now spend time walking round the rooms, monitoring the provision, and integrating with staff and children. Children have access to good facilities but these are not always used to their full advantage. For example, the quiet area. Staff have opportunities to access training although not all staff have attended training to support the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage.

Procedures for vetting and induction of staff are satisfactory but other persons living on the premises have not been checked in order to fully support children's welfare and safety. Risk assessments are carried out and reviewed but these are not always robust or effectively implemented.

All the required documentation is in place and confidentially stored. Staff now have clear systems for monitoring the attendance of children, staff and visitors which work in practice underpinning children's safety. Staff in each area keep accurate registers and records of accidents and medication. Sessions run smoothly, adult: child ratios are met and staff are deployed directly with the children. The training action plan has been reviewed following staff changes and continues to be implemented in order to meet the requirements for staff qualifications. Many staff have now completed food hygiene courses, the kitchen and food storage areas have been upgraded to promote food safety. A number of staff have attended taster sessions about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this is having a positive impact on the experiences for

children under three. More sessions are planned to expand staff knowledge and improve this area further.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the children that attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

A number of actions and recommendations were made at the last inspection and a further subsequent visit. Details of the latter are recorded in the section on complaints. Progress overall has been patchy with improvements in some areas but further action required in others. Children's safety has been improved because clear systems are now in place for organising the deployment of staff and recording the attendance of children, staff and visitors. Procedures for ensuring that children do not leave the premises unattended are implemented well but those for monitoring an entrance to the building are still sometimes ineffective. Staff generally demonstrate a good awareness of safety issues and monitor sleeping children well. Most of the premises are warm and welcoming to children and staff are already implementing changes to a sleep room in the two to three year old area to make it more comfortable and child friendly. A member of staff has completed child protection training and a number of staff have a basic knowledge but systems for handling concerns are still not clear and a further recommendation has been made at this inspection. Procedures for keeping accident and medication records have also improved with parents consistently signing records. Staff ratios meet the requirements and staff are deployed directly with the children but frequent staff changes continue to disrupt the keyworker system and continuity of care of children. Resources that children use are appropriate but still lack sufficient range and challenge in some areas including those depicting diversity. Further recommendations have been made at this inspection to improve children's access to these.

Complaints since the last inspection

Two complaints have been made to Ofsted since the last inspection in April 2004.

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.

On the first occasion, concerns were raised about the security of the setting, specifically that a child could be seen unsupervised in the car park area of the nursery grounds. This relates to National Standard 6 Safety. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit at the nursery on 22 February 2005. The inspector found that a risk assessment following the incident had been carried out but that there were still weaknesses to the security during times when children are collected from the nursery. As a result the setting was required to carry out the following actions: make sure that all entrance doors and gates are secure and that children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised; conduct a risk assessment on security at arrival and collection times identifying actions to be taken to minimize identified risks; ensure

all reasonable steps are taken for the safe arrival and collection of children and provide evidence of a written record of complaints. The provider reported back to Ofsted with evidence of actions that had been undertaken. This was reviewed and as a result the provider remained qualified for registration.

On the second occasion, concerns were raised about the high turnover of staff, the age and experience of those left in charge of the nursery, lack of supervision for unqualified staff and deployment of unvetted staff. Further concerns were raised about the supervision of children, their access to drinks in hot weather and procedures to protect children from the sun when playing outdoors. These relate to National Standard 1 Suitable Person, National Standard 2 Organisation, and National Standard 6 Safety. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit on 5 September 2005. As a result the provider was required to carry out the following actions: provide a copy of the record of attendance for staff and children demonstrating times of arrival and departure for the 2 weeks from 5 September 2005 to 16 September 2005 inclusive; demonstrate how staff are deployed in the nursery to maintain the adult: child ratio at all times to meet the needs of the individual children and provide continuity of care; provide an action plan for Ofsted's consideration to demonstrate how staff qualifications and experience of staff covering for staff absences including those of the manager, lunch time cover, early and late shifts; demonstrate the training needs of all staff are addressed including those relating to the updating of the underpinning knowledge of the Officer in Charge; notify Ofsted of all staff currently employed at the nursery, including details of how their suitability has been verified, their qualifications and experience for the post. A further four recommendations were also made to improve practice for Standard 2 Organisation, Standard 6 Safety and Standard 8 Food and Drink.

The provider reported back and the response was reviewed. As a result the provider remained qualified for registration and a decision was made to continue to monitor the setting at an early inspection.

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On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review and improve hygiene practices to ensure that all areas are clean and attractive to children, and that staff use appropriate hand washing facilities
- ensure that risk assessments are robust, comprehensive and consistently implemented especially with regard to: the security of the entrance doors; carrying out emergency evacuation drills; the vetting of those who are resident on the premises
- improve staff knowledge of child protection and identify a designated person
- ensure that there are sufficient, suitable toys and play materials to provide stimulating activities and play opportunities that meet the developmental needs of all children especially with regard to the youngest toddlers and those promoting positive images of diversity and disability
- improve the deployment of staff and the keyworker system to enhance the quality of experiences and continuity of care that children receive
- continue to implement the training action plan to improve staff qualifications to meet the requirements.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage in order to provide children with a range of activities to cover all areas of learning
- implement arrangements to provide parents with information on the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, and ensure parents are given opportunities to support their child's learning and progress
- ensure that regular observations and assessments are used to move children forward at a pace suitable to their individual needs
- ensure that children have access to free painting, role play equipment and dressing up clothes to develop imaginative and creative play.

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