



Old School House Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402180
Inspection date	23 January 2006
Inspector	Nicola Mary Eileen Matthews
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Registered person	Old School 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Old House Kindergarten is one of 7 nurseries run by the providers. It opened in 1996 and operates from 6 rooms in a converted house. It is situated in Stanway on the outskirts of Colchester. A maximum of 46 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The kindergarten is open each week day from 08:30 to 15:00 It closes for 1 week over Easter and Christmas and all of the month of August. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 103 children from 9 months to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 57 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The kindergarten has systems in place to support children with special educational needs, and who speak English as an additional language.

The kindergarten employs 15 staff. There are 14 of the staff, including the manager, who hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one member of staff working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in clean and very well maintained playrooms. Their health and well-being is ensured by the kindergarten's clearly written policies and procedures for administration of medication, recording accidents and health and safety. The sick children policy is being updated to include exclusion periods to ensure parents are clear about when their child can return to the setting after an infectious illness. Older children independently follow good hygiene practices. They know they must wash their hands because they are 'dirty'. Younger children have their health promoted as staff follow good hygiene practices when changing nappies and toileting toddlers. Those potty training have their successes celebrated in style. They announce to other members of staff what they have achieved and receive lots of praise which fosters their self-esteem and motivation to continue towards their independence.

Children's dietary needs are well met. Their parents are consulted about any food allergies and specific requirements ensuring all staff effectively meet children's individual dietary needs. Children's parents provide the food which is plated and refrigerated until needed. Some children's meals are heated up in the microwave and the temperature recorded to ensure any harmful bacteria are destroyed. Their food intake is recorded in their daily diaries and these are shared with parents on a daily basis. Snacks are provided by the setting and these are nutritious and healthy. Drinks are made available at all times to ensure children do not become dehydrated.

Children's emotional well-being is effectively fostered by caring and supportive staff that provide a secure base for young children to explore their environment from. Children confidently enter the kindergarten and settle very quickly and eagerly explore the well prepared playroom. Their feeding and sleeping routines at home are acknowledged in the kindergarten, fostering their sense of belonging.

Children of all ages enjoy physical activity. They experience programmed outdoor play twice a day, weather permitting. Children are developing their balance and coordination as they excitedly run and pedal wheeled toys around the garden and use the parachute.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, welcoming and very secure environment where all visitors are monitored. They are safe because a regular risk assessment is conducted and updated involving the staff from each room who contribute to the overall risk assessment document. However, a couple of hazards have not been minimised. Children can access clean, child friendly and well equipped toilet facilities leading from each room where all chemicals are safely kept out of reach. Babies and toddlers nappy changing is safe as staff follow clear procedures to ensure children do not fall off the mat.

Children's playrooms are furnished with good quality resources and equipment which meet safety requirements ensuring children can play safely. They independently choose activities which are stored in the room on low-level shelving, boxes and table tops.

Children's welfare is promoted and safeguarded through the clearly documented policies and procedures that all staff are aware of. The policy has recently been updated to include the procedure to follow in the event allegations are made against a member of staff or volunteer ensuring children's welfare is paramount at all times.

The staff have current first aid certificates which are renewed on a rolling programme and have knowledge of the Area Child Protection Committee Guidance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive confidently and the older ones take their coats off and independently hang them up on their named coat pegs. They are taken to their room by their parent and settle very quickly into an activity of their choice. The younger children experience a range of planned activities using the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They eagerly and joyfully participate in exploring play dough, lengths of material, ribbons and pom poms, observing the movement and listening to the rustling noise of the pom poms.

Children are becoming skilful communicators as staff use attentive body language and they modulate their voices which attracts the children's attention and encourages them to participate in a reciprocal relationship. They have their gestures and first words clarified, repeated and echoed by the staff. For example, as a child reaches for a toy on the shelf the adult clarifies that the child wants it as it is lifted down on to the floor. Also, toddlers choose a song they would like to sing by touching and naming objects on cards which is reinforced by the adult. They enjoy songs and rhymes and confidently try to imitate the actions demonstrated by the adults.

Children throughout the kindergarten are developing good social skills as they play alongside or with each other. They share and take turns amicably and many of the older ones spontaneously say please and thank you.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals as they participate in a variety of interesting activities available. However, at times some activities, mainly the worksheets, are very adult orientated and limits the children's independent choice and creativity. Children's experiences are planned using a clear format linked to the stepping stones in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. This is completed very effectively in one of the three rooms. Similarly the assessment records are also linked to these. Children's progress is documented using the assessment records and evaluated to inform future planning to enable children to progress in their learning.

Children experience a good range of resources, which is easily accessible, to support their learning in all six areas of the curriculum indoors. They have programmed outdoor play which in the winter months is dominated by developing their physical skills. They miss valuable opportunities to explore nature and other areas of learning in the garden.

Children's self initiated and adult led play is well supported by patient and caring staff. They use open ended questioning effectively to enable children to demonstrate what they know and challenge some thinking. For example, during the story about going to the beach children were encouraged to think about what they did in the summer at the seaside.

Children's language development is good. They are confident articulate communicators initiating conversations with each other and the staff. Children are recognising letter sounds as a nominated letter is included in the weekly plans with activities to support this. For example, children enjoy learning about the letter 's' as they are encouraged to think of words beginning with this letter as they look at pictures of sunflowers, stars etcetera on the radiator cover. They complete simple computer programmes that enable them to learn about word patterns as they expertly manoeuvre the mouse to drag and drop, simple words that often rhyme, onto the 'train'.

Children are developing good recognition of number. They count with a purpose in mind and know which number comes after a nominated one up to 10. Children can recognise simple shapes confidently and are developing good understanding of the orientation of shape as staff use clear description of how many sides and angles a nominated shape has. They use mathematical language in their play talking about biggest, smallest, shortest and tallest when building towers with the bricks.

Children enjoy cooking activities where they recognise how ingredients change when mixed together and cooked. They design their own shape for scones and enjoy using junk to glue boxes etcetera together to practise a joining technique. Children confidently recall what they have done during the weekend and use their own creativity to represent in drawings where they went or who visited them. They include language of the past, present and future in their conversations demonstrating that they are developing a good sense of time. Children are learning about their local community as they listen to visitors invited into the kindergarten to demonstrate who in the community helps them, for example the fire service. Children see pictures on the playroom wall of religious buildings such as a mosque and the Wailing Wall in Bethlehem and multicultural dolls in the wooden house in the entrance hall. They

participate in activities associated with other cultures to enable them to begin to understand about similarities and differences in others.

Children explore colour as they participate in a variety of painting techniques. They confidently and accurately name many different colours. Children enjoy pretend play and extend their imagination when pretending to be postmen by posting the letters previously written in junk-model houses. They use a variety of musical instruments to tap out rhythms and have developed a repertoire of songs they enjoy singing.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children experience a meaningful range of resources to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase their understanding of diversity in others. They celebrate different cultural festivals including their own which enables them to develop respect for their own and other's cultures.

Children with special educational needs are well cared for. Their development is closely monitored and the kindergarten work closely with the parents and other agencies to ensure children can participate in all activities to enable them to progress in their development.

Children play harmoniously alongside each other, they share and take turns amicably and their behaviour is very good. They play imaginatively in groups and negotiate roles, such as who will post the letter. Children are learning to take responsibility for their own personal care in toileting and dressing. They show awe and wonder in their play especially when using the parachute in the garden. Children welcome visitors into the kindergarten with obvious enjoyment at seeing them again. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive clear information about the kindergarten when their child first starts. They are reminded of who their child's key worker is by a list on the entrance door to each room. Children's planned activities are documented and displayed for parents to see enabling them to understand what their children are learning. Younger children's parents are given a daily diary sheet where all nappy changes, feeding routines etcetera are recorded so they are kept well informed of their child's time in the kindergarten. Children in receipt of free nursery education have their assessment records regularly shared with parents which enable them to be very aware of their children's progress. Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their child's early education through following requests from the staff to help celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year by dressing their child in something red. Parents speak highly of the setting. If they should need to complain a complaints procedure is available and a record will be kept which any parent will be able to see upon request.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The recruitment procedures are robust. Systems are in place to ensure staff who work with the children are safe to do so. The high ratio of trained staff ensures children's needs are well catered for and enables them to provide a stimulating environment for children to learn through their play. Continued training takes a high priority to ensure individual children's needs are met. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator is very enthusiastic about her role and the training she has recently attended to enable her to help children progress effectively in their development.

The leadership and management are good. The manager spends time observing the staff in all the playrooms and uses this to help staff improve their practice. New ways of working are introduced gradually to enable staff to accept the change and effectively put it into practice to enhance the children's learning. For example, the new development sheets for each child, to identify their next step, are being implemented slowly so staff become familiar with them before covering all six areas of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The manager works closely with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and is proactive in improving the childcare and education for young children. The staff work well as a team and take pride in their work which fosters children's self-esteem.

The standard of records is good. Documentation is satisfactory and policies and procedures are in place and updated to comply with current legislation to promote children's well-being. Overall the range of the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to develop the policy for children with special educational needs to include current legislation. This has successfully been completed which ensures children's needs are identified and they are able to take an active part in the kindergarten activities.

Two key issues were raised under the nursery education. One was relating to the assessment records to link them to the stepping stones in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. The kindergarten has successfully adopted the EYDCP format for recording children's achievements which enables them to identify individual children's next step to progress in their learning. The documentation of each child's next step is currently being developed. The other key issue was to encourage children's creativity in art, craft and music. Staff have taken steps to address this and encourage children to be creative. For example, children now use drawing to represent their own ideas, explore musical instruments and independently make junk models.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted has received two complaints.

The first complaint was an anonymous complaint received on 28 February 2005 alleging that a staff member had inappropriately handled a child. This relates to Standard 1: Suitable Person. Ofsted contacted Social Services who made a decision

to take no further action. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit to the kindergarten on 22 March 2005 and discussed the allegation. No evidence was found to substantiate the allegation and Ofsted made a decision to take no further action.

The provider remains qualified for registration. The provider has made a record of the complaint in their complaint record.

Ofsted received another complaint relating to a child who had been excluded from the nursery due to challenging behaviour and that the nursery had failed to work in partnership with the parents and to meet the child's individual needs. We investigated these concerns under Standards 3 (Care, learning and play), 7 (Health), 10 (Special needs), 11 (Behaviour management), and 12 (Working in partnership with parents). Ofsted Childcare Inspectors made an unannounced visit to the nursery on 21 July 2005. The provision was given 2 actions under National Standards 11 (Behaviour management) as follows; to ensure that all staff and registered providers fully understand and follow nursery procedures with regard to behaviour management and to ensure that there is a named staff member who is responsible for behaviour management issues. Compliance with the National Standards will be checked at every future inspection. A satisfactory response to the actions has been received. The provider remains qualified for registration. The provider has made a record of complaints in their complaint record.

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.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- assess the risks to children in relation to the hinge and opening sides of all doors and the bolt on the stair gate and take action to minimise these.

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):

- provide more independent choice and challenge for children when participating in adult initiated activities
- develop the outdoors to provide children with a wider variety of activities to support their learning in all six areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

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