



The Learning Tree

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127693
Inspection date	26 January 2006
Inspector	Jackie Liffen
Setting Address	The Parish Rooms, Cranbrook Road, Maidstone, Kent, TN12 0AZ
Telephone number	07870213952
E-mail	
Registered person	Anna Mary Reiss
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 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?

The Learning Tree nursery has been registered since January 2000. It operates from a hall and two ante rooms in the Parish Rooms, Staplehurst, Kent. A maximum of 24 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open on a sessional basis from 09:00 to 12:00 each weekday during the term time.

There are currently 31 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 15 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The

nursery currently supports some children with special educational needs and also support one child who speaks English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven staff, six of whom, including the manager 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 satisfactory.

Children's own discretion is used when they choose from two types of snacks on offer, for example whether they would like to put jam or marmite on their bread. Staff are aware of the children's individual dietary needs and ensure that they all receive appropriate food. Children are able to help themselves to a drink whenever they wish from a water jug which is placed at a suitable height. Children are reminded to wash their hands under running water and sometimes a member of staff accompanies them, ensuring that they dry themselves on the disposable towelling, which is a distance from the wash basin. Staff wipe snack tables with anti-bacterial cleanser to make sure children are not exposed to unnecessary germs. Children enjoy the fresh air when they are taken on walks from time to time. They extend their spatial awareness and physical ability when they exercise at the end of the morning.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff undertake regular risk assessments to enable children to play safely in the larger entrance room. However, sometimes it is possible for children to trip over toys left scattered on the floor or rugs which are turned up at the corners. Children enjoy experiencing the freedom of space as they move confidently from one activity to another and sit comfortably at child sized tables and chairs to undertake activities such as puzzles and threading. Children are unable to exit the premises unaided during the session and staff promote their security at all times. Staff hold fire drills once a term although some younger children are not familiar with the procedure. However, younger children mix well with the older ones and quickly learn to find their places. Staff take a number of positive steps to promote safety on outings, these include making sure a high ratio of adults to children is maintained. Children are well protected as staff ensure efficient child protection procedures are in place and all adults are aware of the importance of confidentiality. .

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are proud to demonstrate how they recognise their own names when they first come into the group. They understand the process when leaving their parents to

search for an interesting activity during free play. Children adapt the facilities on offer to initiate their own imaginative play, for example, they take the utensils in the maths corner onto the floor to use for serving food in their pretend kitchen. Some children are beginning to respond quickly to commands but others resent having their play interrupted, particularly when they are involved and interested. Children are enthralled by the 'music man' who brings his own instruments; they sit in a circle totally absorbed and involved in his unique style of entertainment. Younger children gradually build up their confidence through playing with familiar media such as play dough. However, they also integrate well with their peers and older children, quickly learning to take turns during role play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are building on their manual dexterity and fine manipulative skills when they are encouraged to undertake tasks such as spreading bread with butter and pouring their own drinks. Children are becoming familiar with the routines of the day and quickly move from one activity to another. Their imaginative play is limitless when they use the toys and resources on offer for a variety of purposes. Children are beginning to recognise their own names when they select their cards to put into the cut-out house on arrival and choose what they wish to have at snack time. However, some opportunities are missed particularly at the writing table when an adult is not present to reinforce the learning. Some children communicate well with their peers, although others prefer to seek attention from adults on a regular basis. Children's listening skills are improving when they gather to listen to a story and they enjoy whole group activities such as playing with a parachute. They consider the weather and the world about them during circle time and some are articulate and confident enough to call out the right answers to questions. Children's knowledge of the outside community is also enhanced when they go on outings, which tend to be the culmination of a great deal of prior topic work.

The group have a designated maths corner where children congregate to play imaginative games. They are able to recognise numbers on the large screen, but do not always interact with adults to reinforce the learning. However, a great deal of mathematical understanding is beginning to arise from their play when they compare the sizes of cars or make shapes with building blocks. Children's self-esteem, manual dexterity and ability is enhanced when they choose and explore different materials to use in junk modelling. Their fine manipulative skills improve as they take time to use smaller construction toys or thread small blocks onto string. Their gross motor skills increase when they run through the hall or ride on wheeled toys. They have fun enjoying themselves whilst developing their spatial awareness in conjunction with the theme of transport.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settling well within the setting because the group communicates effectively with all stakeholders and has a very good partnership with parents and

carers. Parents are very pleased with the care their children receive. Children's well-being is enhanced as parents are kept fully informed and are encouraged to extend children's learning at home. Children's progress is checked by key workers who become familiar with their allocated children's needs and strive to identify any problems which may be worrying them. Children sometimes become over-excited during play and run around, however staff manage children's behaviour well by talking to them and diverting attention. Children with special needs are accepted within the group and staff work closely with parents and professionals in order to promote their development. Children begin to learn to respect cultural diversity as they investigate projects centred on other parts of the world. However, there are few resources for them to play with on a daily basis to help them learn to value differences and begin to respect the concept of equal opportunities within their community. Overall children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the group is sound as the manager is flexible, adaptable and open-minded about improving the service. She reacts in a positive manner to ensure that children's experiences within the setting are expanded. The manager has a strong focus on meeting requirements and encourages staff to improve on their knowledge and ability by undertaking suitable courses on a regular basis. Staff use effective policies to promote the welfare, care and learning of children and to inform parents about the setting. However, in some circumstances parental written permission is not received, for example when children use sun cream. Children's details are efficiently recorded to ensure their needs are met. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to review snack time so that it is used as a learning opportunity; to ensure that all activities are age appropriate; to review how children's assessment records can be used effectively to address individual learning needs and to encourage children to experiment and make choices.

The group have reviewed snack time and now promote this as a learning opportunity. They ensure that all children are able to join in all activities but sometimes divide music and movement into age groups. The staff have reviewed the children's assessment records and now use these effectively to address individual learning needs by ensuring that observations link in with planning. Children are left to experiment for long periods during free playtime, and are encouraged to make choices throughout the morning.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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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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):

- encourage children to independently maintain healthy habits by ensuring that resources can be easily reached
- assess the risks to children in relation to the hazards on the floor and take action to minimise these
- promote children's understanding of equal opportunities by providing more activities to extend their learning
- ensure that written parental permission is obtained in all relevant circumstances.

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 and monitor a varied range of activities for children so that opportunities are not missed to extend their development and learning in all areas.

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