



The Links Day Care Centre Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	200809
Inspection date	11 May 2006
Inspector	Sheila Dawn Flounders
Setting Address	Nathaniel Newton First School, Victoria Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV10 0LS
Telephone number	02476 394782
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Registered person	The Links Daycare Centre 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Links Day Care Centre has been open since 1991 and is run by a management committee. The provision is situated within the Hartshill area of Nuneaton, which is a short distance from the town centre. The setting operates from a building containing 3 large classrooms, which is within the grounds of Nathaniel Newton Infants School. A maximum of 48 children may attend at any one time, with children attending from 2 years 9 months until the age of 12. The setting is open each weekday from 08:00 to

18:00 for 50 weeks of the year, closing only for 2 weeks at Christmas. The facility runs an Early Birds session from 08:00 until 08:45, the nursery from 09:00 until 15:15 and the after school club from 15:30 until 18:00. During the school holidays the play scheme operates all day. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and the group can use the school grounds.

There are currently 80 nursery children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll and a further 188 from 3 to 12 yrs in the Out of School Club. Of these 74 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attending the facility are primarily from the local area and the surrounding villages. The setting currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and several who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs 15 staff. All of the staff, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Several staff are also working towards additional qualifications. The setting has made good links with the school, particularly with the reception class for the funded children, and receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children have very good opportunities for physical play as they can access the enclosed outdoor area for most of their session. Here the younger children ride bikes with ease, negotiate around a course on scooters and balance very well whilst walking around the logs at the side of the 'boat'. The school aged children enjoy activities such as skipping, football, tennis or using the parachute in the school playground. Staff plan activities for the outdoor areas so that the children are enthusiastic about its use. Nursery children also have a timetabled session in the school hall where they are encouraged to use different parts of their body to move. All the children learn about healthy living through their daily access to fresh air and regular exercise.

They are all encouraged to be independent with their personal hygiene and all understand simple good health and hygiene practices. Pictorial reminders and discreet supervision ensures that the younger children do wash their hands frequently and certainly before eating. Children stay healthy because staff have regular cleaning routines for the premises and equipment, to help reduce cross infection, and there is a robust changing routine for those nursery children still in nappies. Parents are made aware of the sickness exclusion policy before children attend and also that they will have to give consent for all medication. Although children do not sleep in the setting, they are able to rest according to their need, with staff ensuring that quiet activities are always available.

Children are well nourished due to the healthy snack which the setting provides, with children having fruit daily and staff ensuring that a simple breakfast is available for

those attending before school. Parents send food for those who stay to lunch and they are reminded to put an ice block in during the warmer months to keep the food fresh. Most of the staff have attended food hygiene training and have a good awareness of food handling procedures. Children have their health and dietary needs met because the setting works with parents to ensure that they have full details of what these are. The setting special needs co-ordinator is responsible for keeping all staff updated about any allergies and medical treatment needed and they attend specialist training when necessary.

Children in receipt of funded nursery education have excellent opportunities to extend their physical development. They move around the setting with confidence and know how to undertake activities safely. They control their large movements when pedalling or climbing and small movements in activities such as using fishing nets or practising Tai-chi. By using the circuit around the outdoor area or pushing the wheelchair around inside they demonstrate a good sense of space, and can form a large circle quickly in an emergency. Through frequent practise with a range of tools and objects, such as paintbrushes, train track, dough or inset puzzles, they develop their hand-eye co-ordination and show increasing control with fine movements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, very secure and safe environment. There are very robust arrival and checking procedures to make sure that the changeovers at the beginning and end of each session are conducted safely. Any discrepancies between numbers expected and those attending are quickly checked. Staff are particularly vigilant in checking unknown visitors so that children's safety is not compromised. All parents and children are made very welcome with staff always available to answer any queries or discuss concerns.

The premises are bright, airy and colourful with children's work prominently displayed in all areas and resources arranged attractively so that children are encouraged to self-select safely. Measures, such as socket covers and a gate across the kitchen area, help to protect children from potential harm and as a result they have only had minor accidents, consistent with their ages and abilities. Full and detailed risk assessments ensure that children use only suitable and safe equipment, although these do not include recent changes to the outdoor area or use of the school hall. Children are reminded appropriately of safety issues by staff throughout the day, for example, not to run inside and discussing why they should not build the train track where people walk.

Children are also kept safe when outside with a soft surface fitted in the newly refurbished area. The security of the nursery outdoor classroom and adjacent playground is very good and children are always well supervised when using them. A full and detailed risk assessment ensures that older children are escorted safely to and from school. Parental consent is gained for all outings, including those in the school grounds and they are asked to put sun-cream on the children and to send in hats in the summer months. Children learn to protect themselves through the

frequent emergency evacuation drills which are practised at different times to ensure all participate. They are further protected because the staff understand their role in child protection and know what procedures to put in place when necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they have the freedom to access all areas of the premises and select resources for themselves most of the time. They are interested in what they do and become involved in activities, particularly creative activities and outdoor play. The older children in the out of school club access the school playground to play games. Pool and table activities are available inside. They are appropriate to their age, such as bingo, knex and a video night. All the children are able to ask questions throughout the sessions and high staffing levels ensure they get a response. They acquire new knowledge and skills constantly through the good first hand experiences they are offered, for example cooking, gardening or visiting local shops in connection with topics. Staff are skilled at supporting children of all ages when they are trying out new activities, they will sit with them, show them how to do something for the first time and then keep an eye on them until they are more confident. All of the children in the setting make positive relationships with the staff and each other. They are encouraged to interact together and there is always someone available to talk to or play with. Appropriate boundaries are in place for the nursery children and the out of school club so that children are able to distinguish between right and wrong.

The teaching and learning of the funded nursery education is outstanding. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the foundation stage curriculum. They know why they are doing the activities and what they expect the children to learn from them. They use very effective planning, which contains all necessary details to enable the whole staff team to work together seamlessly towards the learning objectives for that week. Some of the activities planned include specific differentiation to meet the varying needs of those attending, whilst at other times staff are very skilled at providing this within activities they provide for their own groups of children. They use a variety of methods throughout the session, starting with a brief whole group time, through small child-led group choices to keyworker focussed, adult-led activities. They also effectively use story telling, outdoor play, role play and other school facilities to broaden children's experiences. Staff are particularly skilled at managing behaviour, with a strong emphasis on encouraging good behaviour and ensuring that children understand why something is wrong. Their use of their time and the resources of the setting is excellent. They ensure that all areas of the premises are well supervised so that children can be supported effectively when they need it, whilst maintaining necessary routines. They know what resources are needed for each session and ensure these are available. They fully utilise the flexibility of the premises and are not afraid to change the layout to provide an improved learning environment. All of the staff contribute observations they make at activities to the children's assessments. Separate files are readily available in each room for these, which the keyworker then collates regularly. These records are well annotated, with ample examples of the child's work and achievements to clearly show their progress and what they still need

to learn. Staff then plan their next group activities around the needs identified.

Children are well motivated and eager to learn. They are enthusiastic about the activities they are involved in and often spend extended periods engrossed in a particular situation, for example listening to several stories in the book corner with excellent concentration, building an extensive train track or waiting intently to see what is inside when the ice melts. They are confident and hold conversations with adults and each other during which they talk about a range of feelings or ask pertinent questions. They are constantly able to self-select and take responsibility for their personal needs throughout the session, from self-registration on arrival to older children putting on and doing up their own coats to play outside. They are learning to be sensitive to others, as they take turns during a range of activities, or take responsibility for caring for 'Isobel' in her wheelchair. They mostly understand the need for codes of behaviour and know the simple rules of the setting. They are beginning to consider consequences, such as not putting the train track where someone might trip or needing to keep their clothes together during PE. Children are extending their vocabulary all the time, including through the use of sign language, and staff check that they understand and use the correct terminology at times. The older children are particularly confident at explaining what they are doing, for example, how a programmable toy works. All of the children access a wide range of print in the nursery, through books, the computer and signage. They really enjoy books and know the basic elements of a story. They all recognise their own names and many children know the initial letter sound. Many of the 4-year-olds write their names independently, with correctly formed letters, with younger children able to copy their from a card. All the children have good opportunities to write for other purposes such as writing 'prescriptions' in role play, mark making in sand or salt and using the boards outside with chalk.

Children have good knowledge of the numbers to 10 and most competently count out objects to match specific numbers in a group activity, working out how many they will need. All of the children count daily using correct number names, with staff encouraging number recognition through routine activities such as counting the fish in the book or looking at the clock. Each day they count groups of children to go and select their choice of activities after circle time and they also count the total number for the register. They are introduced to addition and subtraction appropriately through number rhymes and they use language such as more, less, big and little frequently in routines and activities. Children have good secure knowledge of the basic shapes, even combining different shapes in their drawing. They experience measurement when monitoring the growth of the flowers outside or weight through using the compare bears. All of the children have very good opportunities to explore and investigate in the setting. They use their senses in 'feely bags' to identify unseen objects, they watch changes in nature as they grow seeds and bulbs in the outdoor classroom, consider the similarities and differences in topics such as light and dark or the changes in water as it defrosts. Children question why things will not happen, such as why the train cannot get onto the bridge and know how things, such as the programmable toy, work. They also confidently use technology such as the computer mouse, printers, calculators and magnets. Timers are used to let them know when they have had their turn on the computer and staff use familiar phrases, such as 'after lunch' with younger children to improve their concept of time. Children can

recall events that have happened in the recent past and talk freely about their homes and families. They are learning to respect each other's culture through the celebration of many festivals, when they like to act out some of the stories involved and try out associated foods.

Creative activities are a strength of the nursery and children have excellent opportunities to handle a very wide variety of media and materials, for example painting directly onto cloth. They have daily access to differing textures, experience colour, including how to mix their own paints, and use a range of different shapes as they make pictures, models and collages in 2 and 3 dimensions. They listen to music, thinking about what it sounds like and sing daily, particularly enjoying joining in with action rhymes or songs which staff link into the stories, such as 'Row your boat' after reading about 'The Rainbow Fish'. Musical instruments are always available. Children make very good use of their imaginations in their creative activities and also in their various role play situations, currently as a doctor's clinic, when they take on roles as parents, patients and staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children have their individual needs met well, including those with additional needs. The setting is pro-active in its approach to those with additional needs, having assured that the building is accessible to all. The special needs co-ordinator discusses each child with their parents to ensure that individual requirements are fully met. She also ensures that any specialist training is made available to staff, particularly to their keyworker, and liaises with external agencies who are also working with the child, all with parental consent. All children are made to feel special in the setting and they quickly have a sense of belonging, with the younger children encouraged to identify strongly with their keyworker group. They see a strong, positive relationship between their parents or carers and the staff, and take pride in showing their families their work displayed all around the rooms. They make use of facilities within the school grounds and the local area and also welcome members of the community into the setting in connection with their themes. They all have constant opportunities to make choices and decisions for themselves about where they want to play, what resources to choose and what to do with them, as most of the activities are very much child led with adult support. At times things can appear chaotic, with diverse activities taking place all over the premises and children moving between them, but very strong tracking systems ensure that staff do know what each individual child has been doing.

Most of the children understand reasonable behaviour, are aware of the boundaries of the setting and able to point out when others do not keep to them. Those who find managing their behaviour difficult are given frequent praise by the staff when they do behave well and encouraged to talk about the things they do which are unacceptable. Suitable strategies are in place to handle any more serious incidents. Children usually respond positively to the reminders given by staff, who all handle behaviour in a consistent way. The children generally get on with each other and are able to share resources and take turns during activities. Nursery children celebrate each other's

birthdays, take turns to take 'Barnaby bear' home and share his experiences with the group and applaud other's achievements. This enables them to feel special at times, whilst respecting others differences. All the children are expected to be responsible and help with tidying away at certain times, such as after their snack or towards the end of the session. The nursery children are encouraged to take turns caring for 'Isobel' in her wheelchair and use basic sign language to communicate with her, which provides them with an excellent opportunity to learn that others have different needs. They all become aware of wider society as they access a good range of resources regularly which provide positive images of culture, disability and gender.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. They are given information about the setting and its education provision before their child attends, which includes signposting to where they can access more detail within the nursery. They are invited to attend for settling-in visits when their child's keyworker shows them around and introduces them to the routines, such as what will happen when they arrive on their first day. The information they access about the educational provision includes practical examples of activities their child will be involved in on a weekly basis and they receive a regular newsletter. Parents know that they can access their child's developmental record book at any time, as well as at the more formal annual open evening and there are opportunities each day for them to talk to staff, particularly their child's keyworker, about their progress and achievements. The setting ensures that they are always well staffed to facilitate this contact. Parents are encouraged effectively to share what they know about their child, as they fill in an entry assessment with staff and also complete a booklet at home with their child. They stay for at least 2 settling-in sessions with their child which provides opportunities to talk over any concerns with staff. All parents of funded children have excellent opportunities to be involved in their child's learning through access to the weekly plans, information about the activities that will take place in the different areas of learning each week and by using the learning aids which are sent home. They are also able to make use of the lending library of books and mathematical games, attend events such as the coffee mornings, family fun-days or spend time in the setting during 'come to nursery month'. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered in those children receiving funded nursery education.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The staff at the setting have high regard for the well-being of the children in their care, with separate managers responsible for the nursery and out of school aspects of the provision. Staff are all appropriately qualified and experienced, with a strong commitment to attending regular ongoing training. The managers supervise their staff well, with a robust recruitment, induction and ongoing appraisal system in place. However, as the managers do not have a similar appraisal from the management committee there is no overview of the provision as a whole.

Staff organise the space within the premises well to provide a child-centred environment, with all three rooms and the outdoor area in use for most of the sessions, ensuring that staffing levels are high enough to supervise all areas. The

flexible layout enables the younger children to be cared for separately to the school-aged children during the school holidays so that they each access activities relevant to their age group. All necessary policies and procedures are in place; these work to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment and achievements and their positive contribution to the setting. Most documentation is accurate and well maintained, although the registers do not show the hours of attendance and the complaints policy has not been updated to reflect recent changes. Parents have access to all paperwork relevant to their child, which is available at any time and all information they provide is kept confidential. Thus, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the funded nursery education is outstanding. They have an established, stable staff group who work very well together. The manager is pro-active in her approach and encourages all staff to play a full role in the setting. They hold regular staff meetings and reflect on their practice so that they are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. They evaluate the activities provided for the children each week and keep detailed evidence to show how children make progress in their learning, which enables the senior staff to monitor the overall provision. The manager and the deputy are always open to suggestions to improve the provision and maintain ongoing contact with the advisory teacher and the foundation stage teachers in the school.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection the setting were asked to conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying action to be taken to minimise identified risks. Since then they have implemented a full range of risk assessments, with both the nursery and the out of school club examining the potential for risk of the premises and their individual activities on their children and staff.

They were also asked to further develop written planning for the funded nursery children to show how an activity could be adapted to suit children of different ages, who learn at different rates or who have particular needs. Since then they have included this for many of the focussed activities detailed on the plans and staff also incorporate differentiation into the activities they develop for their own keyworker groups.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 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.

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 outstanding.

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):

- ensure that the registration system shows the hours of attendance of children and staff
- ensure that a record of complaints from parents is maintained and they are informed of the outcome of any investigation
- implement a system to overview the provision as a whole
- ensure that risk assessments are updated when changes are made

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