



Little Owls Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Susan Patricia Birkenhead

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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 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?

Little Owls Pre-School has been registered under the current owner since 1999. It is an independent, privately funded pre-school offering full day care for children aged 2 to 5 years. The group has been registered under the current ownership since September 1999. It operates from two designated rooms within Rudheath Centre, owned by the Local Authority. The Centre is situated on the outskirts of the village adjacent to Rudheath County Primary School.

The group is currently registered to accommodate 22 children at any one time and is open Monday to Friday 08.15 to 16.00, for 50 weeks of the year. There are currently 64 children on roll, of whom 39 receive funding for nursery education. Little Owls supports children with special educational needs and have accommodated children who speak English as an additional language. Children are cared for on a sessional or full day care basis.

The registered person who takes on the role of manager holds a relevant Early Years qualification and employs a deputy who is also qualified. In addition, five staff are employed, of these two hold Early Years qualifications and one is working towards a recognised qualification. The Pre-school receive support from the Sure Start development officer.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and well-being is positively promoted through the effective practices and thorough procedures followed, which are reflected in the detailed, written policy. For example, children confidently wash their hands before snack, meals and after using the toilet. Children are familiar with the routines and access the washing facilities independently, consistently using the liquid soap. Younger children are given gentle reminders and assisted as necessary. Older children competently explain the reasons for washing their hands and know it is to "get rid of germs, which may make them poorly". The detailed sick child policy in place is shared with parents and carers. This ensures they are aware of the group's responsibilities in relation to sick children, which enables them to care for children within an environment that is as free from infection as possible. Positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection throughout the day. For example, protective clothing and gloves are worn for nappy changing and preparing snacks, tables are cleaned using antibacterial sprays and protective cloths cover that tables at meal times. The children's welfare is generally safeguarded. When they have an accident or are administered medication, the staff followed appropriate procedures and hold first aid qualifications. However, parental consent for the seeking of emergency medical advice or treatment has not been consistently obtained, which compromises the children's welfare.

Children's physical development is well provided for. Daily access to physical activities both indoors or outdoors is contributing to the development of the children's physical skills and abilities. The children have opportunities and prove competent in riding one or two seater bicycles and scooters. They can access the climbing apparatus, crawl through tunnels and balance using stilts. Children participate in PE twice weekly, which includes music and movement. They develop their smaller physical skills well because they have access to a wide range of materials, for example, inset puzzles, writing and creative resources, scissors and construction equipment. Children develop their understanding of the effects that physical exercise has on their overall well-being through planned activities and on a more spontaneous basis following the PE sessions.

Children's healthy eating is well promoted through the snack provision provided. The well organised, continuous snack provision made available during the sessions allows the children to choose when they want to eat their snack. They independently access the drinking water or milk and show great skill at pouring their own drinks. Staff assist younger children where necessary. They are consulted about the daily snack provided and make suggestions about what snack they would like the following day. A range of healthy snacks are well received by children and include bread sticks, various fruits including seasonal fruits, crackers and cheese. They discuss different foods at snack time and circle time and taste cultural foods during the celebration of festivals, for example, tasting Chinese food and experimenting with chop sticks. Therefore, children are developing their understanding of healthy foods. Parents are encouraged to provide a healthy packed lunch for their child staying for lunch. They each receive the leaflet from the pre-school, produced by the Environmental Health Department, 'healthy, safe packed lunches'. Children are involved in a socially interactive time at meal times. The staff sit with them to eat their lunch and the children are organised in smaller groups as they sit at the tables. They actively compare the content of their lunch boxes and engage in conversation with staff and peers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are protected because they are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe environment, which contributes to their learning, development and enjoyment. Space available to children is organised to ensure they have access to a wide range of opportunities and activities both indoors and outdoors. The two rooms available, provide different surroundings for the children to frequent throughout their stay. They are divided into two smaller key worker groups and spend time in each room at different times of the day on a planned basis. The rooms are set out before the children's arrival and offer a range of free play experiences and more structured activities to children. Therefore, all areas of the children's development are actively promoted.

Children have access to an extensive range of resources and equipment to support, extend and challenge their learning. Equipment and resources are checked regularly for cleanliness and safety and damaged items are removed and details recorded in the 'defect book'. As a result, children remain safe. Children demonstrate independence as they make choices about their play, self selecting from play materials and equipment on offer.

Children are cared for within a safe environment because the staff take positive steps to minimise risks to children. For example, risk assessments are completed, the entrance door is secured appropriately, children's access from the room is restricted because of the safety gates in place, staff oversee the arrival and collection of the children and low-level sockets are protected with covers. The detailed, written health and safety policy makes reference to the children's safety and security, use of the outdoor area and procedures followed. Children are learning to keep themselves safe through the effective practices in place. For example, they engage in emergency

evacuation drills termly, staff make the children aware of hazards and explain to them the consequences of their actions as they plan to play outdoors in the snow.

Children's welfare is safeguarded well because the staff has a clear understanding of the role they play in protecting children from abuse. They recognise the signs to look for and the local procedures to follow. The very detailed child protection policy reflects the recent changes in the legislation and outlines the procedures followed, clearly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled within the secure pre-school environment. They are confident on arrival and quickly select for themselves what they want to play with during the initial free play session. Children enjoy their time in the setting and are making good progress in their overall development as they learn through play. The art work around the room contributes to the welcoming feeling and reflect the previous theme followed. However, the level of art work displayed does not always reflect children's self expression and the use of templates is apparent. The good staff ratios employed and the positive staff interaction contributes effectively to the children's learning and encourages them to have fun. The sessions include a good balance of quiet, active indoor and outdoor play experiences.

Children are eager to learn and show excitement and interest in the activities provided. For example, children of all ages attempt to find as many paper bones hidden in the sand tray as possible and later hide them for other children to discover. They share their achievements with staff and other children as they count how many they find. They are excited at the prospect of going outdoors as snow fell the night before. Children are familiar with the routines in place as they remind others to take off their apron as they are changing rooms and talk about tidy up time. Qualified and experienced staff use the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage effectively to provide the children varied and worthwhile experiences to promote their learning. However, not all staff are familiar with the curriculum guidance. The Birth to three matters framework is being established to provide a programme of activities and play to promote all areas of development for the younger children.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The registered person, who is the manager, and the deputy manager take the lead in the planning of a broad and balanced curriculum for children, based on their secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They lead the staff well, and recognise the need to involve all the staff who are in the process of developing their understanding of the areas of learning, due to their more recent involvement of the pre-school. Children enjoy and are actively involved in varied and interesting activities, which support their learning and development across all six areas of learning. Plans are monitored and there are informal systems in place for the evaluation of activities. All staff contribute to the observations on the children's progress and record information, which is transferred to their developmental profiles. These are used to plan for the children's

next steps and the future planning of activities. The 'Step by Step profile' is used to record children's developmental progress. Assessments in place are supported by the children's work books and activity books. All entries are dated and annotated, which contributes to the monitoring of children's progress.

Children are developing very positive relationships with one another and adults who care for them. They recognise the need to share and take turns as they play a game of snap and have to share the cards as two children at the same time call snap. They share the fishing nets willingly in the water tray to catch the frogs as there are only two nets available. Children offer support to each other as an older child assists a younger child to put the apron on for playing in the water. They show concern for one another as one child comments that a child who has not arrived that day "may have chicken pox again" and another child "has a bad cold", when it is highlighted that she has also not arrived. They recognise achievements as they applaud each other when a task has been achieved. For example, singing a song in front of others and placing the spots on the large template of 'spot the dog'. Children are continually developing a good level of independence through a variety of tasks. For example, pouring their own drinks at snack time, putting their own coats on when going out to play and washing their own hands using liquid soap before snacks and meals.

Children demonstrate that they are becoming confident communicators as they engage in conversation during circle time and imaginary play. They are actively encouraged to think for themselves as staff ask "what day is it today" and "what is the weather like outdoors" when they alter the day board at circle time. Therefore, children are regularly using language to communicate, which encourages their thinking. Children experience good opportunities to link sounds and letters. For example, children talk about letters from the alphabet cards and practise associated sounds, recall items, people and objects, which begin with the letter highlighted. They learn through "Jolly phonics" as they concentrate on specific letters of the alphabet. Alphabet posters are displayed around the rooms, which are linked to pictures. Children show a good awareness and enjoyment of books as they access them by choice. Older children sit quietly in the book corner and can be seen retelling a story in their own way, whilst younger children ask for a member of staff to read them a story. They are attentive at story time and show familiarity with the characters as they are asked to name them. They learn many new words as staff explain the meanings of words to them such as "author", "title" and "illustrator". They recognise their own names from the cards held up and move towards the door to line up to go outside to play. A good level of written word is displayed around the room. For example, notices in the animal hospital such as "please take care of the animals" and "please be quiet". However, the storage of resources does not always reflect the content through written word or associated pictures. This would further increase children's opportunities to link words to objects. Children have independent access to mark making materials when recording appointments in the animal hospital. They attempt to write their names and copy their name using their name card on the wipe clean boards accessible to them. Some children are confident in writing their own name, others need greater assistance and direction. Children write symbols that they believe represents their name and make patterns in the sand using their fingers.

Children count confidently and natural opportunities are made available for them to count and develop an awareness of number during everyday situations. For example,

children count the number of children present after staff take the register at circle time. Some of them are successful in counting up to 18 and beyond in some circumstances. They then count backwards and when they reach zero staff ask "what does zero mean" and they reply "nothing". They use their fingers to count to 10. They talk about addition and subtraction as they add the spots to the template of 'spot the dog' and then subtraction as they remove one. To which children eagerly respond with the correct answer. They effectively learn to calculate as they compare who has the most paper bones they have found hidden in the sand tray. For example, staff recall one child has three bones, another has two bones, who has the most? Children are confident in their reply, naming the child who has the most. Children negotiate space as they sit together at circle time, when they talk about being "squashed", recognising they need to move around to make more space. They talk about big and small frogs in the water tray and compare the size of the animals in the farm as they talk about the heaviest and the lightest. Children engage in positional language as they talk about lining up behind another child and programming the toy to move forward and backwards.

Children engage in effective and interesting activities, which enables them to explore and investigate. For example, they watch with excitement what happens when the manager pours green food dye into the clear water and enter into discussions about it changing colour. They extend this activity by talking about what lives in the water, involving imaginary frogs and fish. The exercise completed in the children's work book reflects how they mix paint to see the different colours they can create. Children use construction materials to recreate designs following instructions with the staff to produce a helicopter. Due to the change in weather and the snow on the ground staff spontaneously introduced an additional activity. The water tray was filled with snow for the children to play with and observe. This enables the children to learn about properties and change as the snow melts they talk about it making their hands wet and it turning into water. They have access to binoculars and magnifying glasses and use them indoors and outdoors. They use the magnifying glasses to look at the developing shoots on the trees and items around the room. Older children know that when you look through the binoculars it brings items nearer and if you turn them around and look through them, items seem far away. Children are developing their understanding of time through the routine followed. They recognise that tidy up times indicate a change in the routine or that it is time to go home. One child queries "what time is it" and asks if it is time to tidy up. Staff talk about tea time and children respond saying "tea time is when it is dark". Children use past and present in their language as they talk about the weather yesterday and today. Children have limited opportunities to develop their awareness of the local community, however, they learn about cultures and beliefs through the themes and topics planned. For example, Chinese New Year.

Children are making good progress in their physical development. They engage in physical exercise twice weekly through the organised PE sessions. They have regular opportunities to play outdoors during the day. The children have access to a wide range of resources to promote their physical skills both indoors and outdoors, which they use confidently. For example, the two seated bicycles, the climbing apparatus, the stilts to develop their balance, footballs and hoops. Children learn a sense of space as they negotiate the pathway when riding bicycles outdoors, sitting

as a large group at circle time and during music and movement sessions. Therefore, children experience worthwhile opportunities to develop control and coordination over their bodies. Children are developing their competence in the use of writing materials, glue sticks during creative work and tools for cutting and making patterns in the play dough. Where necessary staff provide assistance and guide and support them in their efforts. As a result children are developing their finer manipulative skills with increasing control.

Children are generally provided with many valuable experiences to play creatively using various materials and techniques. For example, they use wooden sticks, straws and paints to recreate the story of the 'three little pigs' displayed. However, they have little opportunity to express themselves freely through their art work as they are directed by adult initiated templates particularly when producing a frieze for the wall. They use collage materials to decorate the templates of the snowman and 'spot the dog'. Photographic evidence reflects how children complete observational drawings of the snow drops from free hand. They make 3D models using discarded household boxes and enjoy tactile play as they make models of houses from clay, have regular access to the sand and water and experiment with ice. Children explore sound through the use of the musical instruments. They use rain sticks, maracas, shakers and the wave drum to imitate the sound of the wind and the rain during a group activity, developing their understanding of rhythm. Children enthusiastically take part in action rhymes and are familiar with the rhymes they sing, which incorporate number. For example, 'five little ducks' and 'one potato two potato'. Children are provided with varied and interesting opportunities to play imaginatively because the role play area changes emphasis regularly. For example, the animal hospital in line with the current theme. The area is effectively planned with resources to support children's imagination and proved popular with the children. For example, make believe cats, rabbits, dogs and spiders, stethoscope, syringes and dressing up materials such as a nurses outfit and vets coat.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children have equal access to play and opportunities without stereotyping. Relationships are developed with outside agencies to support children with identified special needs. Play and activities are modified to ensure children of all abilities are fully inclusive. Good relationships are developed with the children as the staff know them well and are familiar with their individual ways and needs. The children's understanding of the wider world is developed well through the celebration of festivals throughout the year. For example, Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Divali and Chinese New Year. Children sample cultural foods and dress up as part of these celebrations and produce Chinese dragons using boxes during creative play. The children have access to a wide range of resources to promote their positive understanding of diversity through play. For example, they access the play figures in the house, which promote race and disability and they read stories, which outline different cultures. Therefore, their understanding of peoples differences within society is actively promoted.

Children are very responsive to staff direction and the methods used for managing their behaviour are effective. For example, minor disagreements are handled positively through discussion and reasoning with the children. Children's behaviour is managed consistently between the staff and close liaison with their parents. There are systems in place for encouraging children's good behaviour and recognising their achievements. For example, children receive smiley face stickers for producing a particular picture or behaving well and they recognise their own and others achievements as they applaud each others efforts when singing songs in front of the group. They are developing close relationships with other children as they play cooperatively by sharing and taking turns. They show concern for one another. For example, one child tells another child she has glue on her face and asks if she would like her to get it off for her. Once she has completed this task she asks "does that feel better now". They learn to show compassion as they tend to the animals in the imaginary animal hospital. Therefore, children are compassionate, well behaved and their confidence and self-esteem is promoted effectively. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Introductions to pre-school are managed well because parents are given detailed information regarding the setting and what to expect. They provide detailed information relating to their child individually. As a result children benefit from the effective exchange of information between their parents, carers and staff. For example, a good level of information regarding the setting is shared with parents during the introductory visits they make to pre-school initially and the documentation issued. The parents notice board enables parents to read information relating to the Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Parents complete the initial booklet provided, which outlines their child's starting points and includes their likes and dislikes. Parents are encouraged effectively to continue the children's learning at home as they take part in the book loan system in place. Children's development and achievements are shared with parents as they attend 'parents days' annually. Parents know they can access the children's developmental profiles at any time and engage in discussion with staff on arrival or collection of their child. Parents speak appreciatively of the care and education their children receive and feel confident in approaching the staff should they have concerns.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are protected because the registered person has implemented robust clearance procedures for staff employed, following the introduction of the new legislation. Staff know that persons not vetted are not left with unsupervised access to children.

The available space is planned to maximise play opportunities for children. The two rooms are organised to provide different opportunities for the children, which they access on a rotating basis in their key worker groups throughout their stay. Children are familiar with this routine, which provides them with some variation within the environment. They access the outdoor play area at regular intervals to engage in the

more physical play experiences daily.

Children benefit from the good staff ratio employed, which enables them to receive greater adult support during their play, learning and activities. A good ratio of qualified staff are employed and others are in the process of training in Early Years. Staff have access to the Early Years training available to further develop their knowledge and skills and enhance the children's learning in all areas.

Written policies and procedures in place are detailed and reviewed on a regular basis by the registered person. They contain comprehensive information in order to comply with the National Standards and prove informative for staff and parents regarding the pre-school practices. All legally required documentation that contributes to the children's health, safety and well-being is generally in place. However, minimal attention is necessary to the staff and children's attendance register and obtaining parental consent for the seeking of necessary emergency medical advice or treatment.

Leadership and Management is good. The registered person who also takes on the role of the manager is clear about her role and the individual roles of her deputy manager and staff team. They give consideration to areas for improvement as they attend cluster meetings locally and accept support from the Sure Start development officer. Staff are supervised effectively to support the needs of the children. For example, they receive appraisals annually, their training needs are identified and staff meetings held regularly ensure practices are shared. The development of the curriculum policies relating to the Foundation Stage and the areas of learning refer to the aims, objectives, the operating policy and the programme of work. Not all staff are familiar with the Foundation Stage due to their more recent appointments, however this is recognised as a training need within the staff team.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

During the previous Children Act inspection the provider was requested to give attention to aspects of documentation and procedures followed. The recommendations raised referred to omissions in the policies to inform parents of practices followed, which included the procedure for uncollected children, the complaints policy and the child protection policy. The recommendations raised regarding the documentation referred to amendments to the current systems for recording information and included, the incident record to ensure the children's name is recorded and information is shared with parents. The attendance register, to ensure the details of visitors to the premises are recorded and the arrival and departure times of the staff are reflected. The staff records, to ensure that the details of all staff employed and information regarding the registered person are available on site. However, since the last inspection the provider has addressed all recommendations raised, with the exception of the register to include the arrival and departure of staff on duty. All policies and procedures have been updated and necessary amendments made consistent with the National Standards. Therefore, making parents familiar with practices followed and ensuring children's welfare is

maintained at all times.

During the last Nursery Education inspection the provider was requested to give attention to aspects of the planning of activities, the communication with parents and develop opportunities for the children to explore and investigate during play and activities. Since the last inspection the provider has addressed the aspects raised. She gave attention to the planning of activities in line with the requests made. However, the provider is currently working with the Sure Start development officer regarding changes to the planning used, to further develop this area of practice. Parents are now consulted about the children's developmental progress during parents days organised and regular contact through newsletters, information displayed and discussion keeps parents informed. Appropriate provision has been made through activities planned or on a more spontaneous basis for children to have greater opportunities to explore and investigate, which is demonstrated through photographic evidence and during observations made during the inspection. Therefore, promoting children's learning in this particular area.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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):

- ensure consent for the seeking of emergency medical advice or treatment is obtained from all parents
- ensure the system for registering the children and staff on a daily basis reflects the hours of attendance.

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):

- develop further opportunities for children to link words to objects when accessing resources within the setting and enhance children's opportunities to express themselves freely through art work
- provide opportunities for all staff to develop their knowledge and understanding 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