



The Little School by the Lake

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY301512
Inspection date	03 February 2006
Inspector	Louise, Caroline Bonney
Setting Address	Heath Road, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 4EJ
Telephone number	01730 231537
E-mail	
Registered person	Patricia Lynne Matthews
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?

The Little School by the Lake registered in 2005 under its current ownership and is one of two privately owned nurseries. It operates from a building comprising of four toddler and pre-school rooms, a separate baby unit and an enclosed outdoor area. It serves families from the local community and surrounding villages.

There are currently 56 children, aged from 3 months to 5 years, on roll. These are separated into 4 groups according to their age and stage of development. There are

20 children receiving nursery education funding. Children mostly attend for full day care but some attend for various sessions. The setting makes provision for children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery opens 5 days a week for 52 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 08:00 until 18:00, Monday to Friday.

There are 10 full-time and 1 part-time members of staff working with the children. Of these, 6 have early years qualifications at the equivalent levels of 4, 3 and 2, and 1 is currently on a training programme.

The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. Each day there are indoor and outdoor activities which help them develop awareness and control of their bodies. They run, climb and dig in the garden and inside they crawl and balance as they complete an obstacle course.

Children learn about healthy eating as they enjoy nutritious snacks and meals. Staff cook these on-site and use fresh ingredients. Toddlers and pre-school children join together for sociable mealtimes and staff help children learn about which foods are healthy as they discuss the food collages on the walls. Staff take account of children's preferences and allergies, providing alternatives to ensure they eat well. Children have frequent drinks as they help themselves to their drinking flasks throughout the day. Babies benefit from staff seeking information about and continuing their home routines. They relax as staff hold them close during bottle feeding and settle well for sleeps. This helps them to cope well with their day at the nursery.

Children learn about the importance of good hygiene through the routines in place. Older children independently look after their personal care. They wash their hands before eating or after toileting and know the reason why. Younger children look at the picture prompts by the basins and staff support them well as they develop awareness. Staff protect babies and toddlers from cross-infection during nappy-changing through maintaining effective procedures, such as wearing disposable gloves and aprons. Children have their medical needs met by caring staff who quickly notice if they are unwell and take appropriate action immediately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in the welcoming, secure and safe indoor environment which staff risk-assess daily. They stay safe through the implementation of effective procedures,

such as the careful monitoring of sleeping children and babies and clear collection procedures.

Children use appropriate and well-maintained equipment which is suitable for their various ages. Indoors, staff strategically place safety gates to create safe play areas for younger children. These prevent them from accessing unsuitable toys and equipment, such as in the older children's base room.

However, not all door locks are suitable for children to access. Children benefit from using the outdoor area which is fully fenced, although the gate is not locked to make it completely secure.

Older children learn how to be safe. For instance, they consider which garden tools they must keep away from the toddlers, checking the edges of their trowels for sharpness. They know how to carry scissors safely and close their safety gate to prevent younger children entering their base-room. Toddlers learn how to be safe as staff support them as they climb and slide outside. In addition, they learn through awareness of rules, such as not throwing toys or climbing on furniture.

Older children show good awareness of the emergency evacuation procedure due to the frequent fire drills. Staff protect children well due to their clear understanding of the child protection procedures in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Babies and toddlers settle well and develop good relationships with staff. Children are happy at the provision. The caring and attentive staff relate well to them and are sensitive to their needs and emotions. Children move up through the nursery at a pace that suits their level of confidence and development. They are able to mix with older groups at various times during the day. This makes the transfer easier.

Staff provide a wide range of exciting and stimulating activities which children very much enjoy. For instance, babies handle a mashed potato mix to develop awareness of their senses and toddlers learn about space and movement as they run under a large sheet the staff hold aloft. Staff effectively use the Birth to three matters guidance to develop their planning. They assess children's development on first arrival and continue to monitor their progress. Staff in the baby unit are trialling a new system to identify children's next steps in learning, although at present there is no clear system in place to do this for toddlers. Children who have any delays in development receive good support by staff who liaise closely with parents and share information from other professionals.

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning for children receiving nursery education funding is good. Staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and plan a range of activities, inside and outside, that children find stimulating and interesting. Plans make provision for the differing levels of children's understanding and help provide

suitable levels of challenge.

Staff have a good knowledge of the children's individual stages of development. They evaluate the activities, observe the children's learning and record their progress against the early learning goals' stepping stones. However, staff do not use these records to clearly identify children's next steps in learning to further support planning and share with parents.

Children influence the provision as they select resources and staff respond to their interests by extending topics. Children show good levels of concentration during their chosen tasks and confidently ask for more time to complete their activities when necessary. They develop their independence well as staff encourage them to plan and review their activities, select their resources and look after their own personal care. Children show good understanding of the rules and behave well.

Children are confident communicators and express themselves clearly. Staff encourage them to put their thoughts into words as they plan their activities together. They listen carefully as staff give them clear instructions. Some children recognise their written names and understand that writing carries meaning. With adult support they make books, such as to record how their mushrooms are growing or the adventures of the group teddy that they take home in turns.

Children explore shape as they paint large boxes and build with bricks. They experiment with volume as they pour a measure of water into flat and tall containers, marvelling at how it changes. They calculate and use number during planned activities. However, children do not have sufficient opportunities to use number or write for a purpose during free-play or to label their own work.

Children show curiosity and interest in the natural world. For instance, as they dig in the garden they look closely at worms and snails. They learn about the wider community as they visit the town mobility centre and see the wheelchairs available. Children develop respect for differences as they celebrate each other's festivals or taste foods from around the world. They develop a sense of time as they recall teddy's adventures when they have taken him home or as they watch their mushrooms grow.

Children use their imaginations and creativity well and move resources around freely to support their role-play. They carefully select their own art and craft materials to take outside when making a dragon's head and observe how colours change as they mix their own paints. They develop good dexterity as they construct with various kits and use tools, such as trowels, spades and rakes when gardening. They show a good sense of space as they move in various ways in a large group or fit into small spaces during role-play. Children show awareness of the effects of activity on their bodies as they warm up before exercising during planned activities. They enjoy challenges as they complete obstacle courses, although access to larger equipment is limited.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children participate well during their activities and know that staff value and respect their individuality. Staff listen to the children. They give them good opportunities to make choices and take decisions as they develop their own play. Staff are quick to adapt activity plans to take into account children's interests and this helps children feel a sense of belonging and ownership of the provision.

Children behave well. They are increasingly aware of the rules in place. Older children know the boundaries, occasionally reminding younger children. Staff skilfully help older children resolve any conflicts through discussion and suggestions and provide good support to younger children as they learn to communicate their feelings. Children show care and concern for each other. For instance, they help a friend seek adult help when they hurt themselves or check the safety of their trowels so as to protect younger children. Staff plan group activities to help children work harmoniously with each other, such as decorating a Chinese dragon and doing the dragon dance together. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. All children benefit from the positive partnership staff develop with parents. Babies settle well as staff work closely with parents to share routines and information about their changing needs. Parents are aware of the children's learning through displays of information and planning which reflects the guidance Birth to three matters. Parents find that staff support them and their children's individual needs well and that they are friendly and approachable. They have good opportunities to share information on a daily basis during handover. Parents opinions about the provision are sought through the suggestions book and any concerns are promptly dealt with, such as the fitting of additional external lighting.

Parents of funded children learn about the Foundation Stage curriculum through the prospectus and by attending the annual open evening. This gives them the opportunity to see the types of activities the children do and staff discuss how these activities help children to learn. They also share their child's achievement records and see how their children are progressing towards the early learning goals. Parents are aware of the learning focus each week and staff provide tips for supporting learning at home. However, staff do not identify children's individual short-term learning goals to share with parents and so further support their progress towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The quality of the leadership and management is good. The manager shares her clear vision for children's learning and care with her staff. Together with key staff she regularly monitors, reflects on and improves the quality of the care and education available to the children. She monitors planning and the children's achievement records to ensure they progress well through the Foundation Stage curriculum. She observes the quality of teaching and leads occasional activities which supports staff

in developing best practise.

Children's care is enhanced by the energetic and enthusiastic management of the nursery and the support of a staff team who is committed to continual improvement. Staff receive a thorough induction and re-visit policies and procedures to ensure their consistent application. The manager and key staff evaluate the provision and make improvements, such as the successful introduction of Birth to three matters.

The manager and staff organise the premises and resources well to support the care and learning needs of the children. Indoor and outdoor space is laid out to maximise play opportunities for children and they have opportunities to mix with different age-groups and see siblings. The provider effectively implements procedures which promote the children's welfare and in most areas, their safety. The provider is aware of the latest revisions to the National Standards, although systems to ensure continued suitability of staff are not sufficiently rigorous.

The provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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 low bolt on the toilet door and the garden gate not being secure
- develop more rigorous systems to ensure the continuing suitability of staff

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 opportunities for children to use number and write for a purpose during free-play activities
- use observations and achievement records to identify children's individual next steps in learning, and share these with parents.

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