



**Office for Standards
in Education**

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 127693

DfES Number: 543334

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 20/06/2003
Inspector Name Virginia Cooper

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name The Learning Tree
Setting Address The Parish Rooms
 Cranbrook Road
 Maidstone
 Kent

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Ms Anna Mary Reiss

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

The Learning Tree nursery has been registered with the current owner since 1996.

The group is registered to care for no more than 24 children from 2 years to under 5 years at any one time; they must not provide overnight care.

The nursery has fifteen funded children attending, one child has English as a second language.

The nursery is open on a Sessional basis from 09:00 to 12:00, each weekday during the term-time.

More than half the staff hold an NVQ III qualification. All staff are encouraged to update their training regularly.

The nursery generally work on a good staff ratio of one adult to five children.

The Learning Tree nursery operates from the Parish Rooms, Staplehurst on the main road next to the Church.

There is a small outdoor play area at the front of the hall, but this is not used often because of the noise of the traffic, however the children are able to use the local tennis court and cricket field for outdoor play, approximately seven minutes walk away. Parents help to walk the children there because of the busy road.

The children use the main hall for their play, there are two smaller rooms at the rear of the hall where children often undertake craft activities and can sit quietly to work or listen to a story.

There is a well equipped kitchen, a gate is used to ensure children do not have access to this area.

Parents usually park in the side-road opposite the hall, or can stop outside for short periods of time.

A detailed prospectus is available for parents.

Another branch of the group is situated in Sissinghurst.

How good is the Day Care?

The Learning Tree nursery provides satisfactory care for the children.

More than half of the staff hold a level III qualification, the rest of the staff are training for a childcare qualification. The staff work effectively as a team.

The operational procedures are effective, all staff are clear about their daily roles and responsibilities.

The staff are safety conscious and all safety equipment is in place, a risk assessment is carried out.

Parents help staff to walk the children to the local cricket field for physical activities, the road they walk beside is very busy.

The staff agreed that a communal hand washing bowl after craft activities will no longer be used and children will wash their hands in the cloakroom.

The child protection policy is recently re-written to reflect the nursery's procedures more accurately.

The children are confident and interact with the staff and each other well.

The children are encouraged in their art and craftwork; the staff are skilled at allowing them to produce something that is wholly their creation. This positive attitude can be extended involving children in the planning stage of the activity allowing them to make more choices about the materials they need to undertake a particular task.

Some children are bored with worksheet activities, particularly the younger children. They will benefit more by practicing their writing skills in role-play activities. The staff agreed to review this and ensure that all activities are age appropriate.

Behaviour management is effective and consistently applied.

Children's development records are not being used effectively to address individual learning needs.

Parents are provided with good information about the provision; they are sent newsletters frequently informing them about the current themes of learning.

Parents are pleased with the service provided and approach staff easily. They are able to visit the group at any time and see their child's development records.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The nappy changing facilities are improved.

Visitors to the provision are now recorded.

The staff are able to provide a rest area for children if required.

The staff ensure that confidentiality is maintained when parents sign the accident book.

What is being done well?

- Staff encourage children in their art and craft activities to produce something that is wholly their work.
- Children speak confidently to staff and each other, they are keen to share their news and achievements.
- Parents are kept well informed about current learning themes so they can extend projects at home.

What needs to be improved?

- the snack time so that this time is used as another learning opportunity; ensure the children have something to interest them whilst they wait for their drink;
- that all activities are age appropriate and of considerable benefit to the children;
- the children's assessment records are reviewed so that they can be used effectively to address individual learning needs;
- children's experimentation is encouraged allowing them to make choices about the materials they need to undertake particular tasks, including them at the planning stage of the activity.

Outcome of the inspection

Satisfactory

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection	
Std	Recommendation
3	review snack time, consider how this time can provide children with additional opportunities to learn new skills. Ensure that the children are interested in the activity provided whilst they wait for their drinks.
6	ensure the number of adults escorting children to the local cricket field is adequate to keep them safe.
6	ensure risk assessment procedures are regularly reviewed.
7	ensure that hand washing procedures are suitable to prevent the spread of infection.
14	ensure that policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and make relevant changes to reflect current practice.
14	ensure all new staff are familiar with the nursery policies and procedures especially Health and Safety and Child Protection.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

The children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals with the exception of Mathematics that is not proportionally represented in the curriculum.

The children's confidence is encouraged, and they are keen to talk with staff and each other and explain ideas they have for play.

The staff are very clear that any creative tasks the children undertake are all their own work, however they do sometimes prematurely help children use tools before they have had much chance to try for themselves.

The children will benefit from more opportunities to explore the properties of different materials for themselves and in turn learn to choose what materials are suitable for different tasks.

The staff display children's work carefully.

All staff are familiar with the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and plan activities for all six areas of learning. They are not finding it easy to introduce children to mathematical concepts, especially making simple calculations however they do undertake counting activities regularly.

Some activities are not age appropriate and some older and more able children are not sufficiently challenged and expressed their boredom. The benefits of each activity are to be evaluated.

The assessment records can be used more effectively to identify children's individual learning needs and to plan activities for these needs.

Snack time can be used more effectively.

The leadership and management is strong, the owner is continually looking for ways to improve the service provided. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and encouraged to update their training.

The setting works well with parents; there is lots of written information about the provision. Parents are able to visit at any time and are encouraged to look at their child's development records regularly.

Parents approach staff easily.

What is being done well?

- Staff engage the children with interesting conversations about the activities

and the world about them.

- Children talk confidently with staff and each other and are keen to share their news and achievements.
- Parents are provided with lots of information about the provision and are welcome to visit at any time.

What needs to be improved?

- mathematics is required to be equally represented in the curriculum.
- staff need to identify more opportunities to introduce children to mathematical concepts, especially making simple calculations and allow them to practice these skills regularly;
- children require more opportunities to explore for themselves the properties of different materials and practice choosing suitable resources for activities based upon this knowledge;
- staff to evaluate the benefit of each activity and ensure the activities challenge children sufficiently;
- staff to use children's assessment records effectively to address individual learning needs.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The group has made generally good progress since the last inspection. The staff have developed their skills delivering activities for language and literacy, they take advantage of many opportunities during the course of a session to introduce these concepts to children.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's personal, social and emotional development is generally good. Children play happily with one another. Staff explain to children the importance of sharing, children listen carefully and understand. Behaviour management is consistently applied, children respond well to what staff say. Different festivals celebrated. The children will benefit from more opportunities to explore and investigate.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's communication, language and literacy development is generally good. Children are confident talking with staff and each other and like to share their news and achievements. Some children are able to write their name. The children enjoy story time, and listen attentively; they can recall the story and practice letter sounds. Some children do not benefit much from worksheet activities; they prefer to practice their pencil control within their play activities.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Significant Weaknesses

Children's mathematical development has significant weaknesses although most children count competently. Staff miss many opportunities to introduce children to mathematical concepts especially simple calculations. The staff are not practiced at using mathematical language and encouraging children to practice their math skills. Staff underestimate children's ability, they ask how many plates a child needs for their table and then proceed to count this out for them.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is generally good. The planned activities are varied and interesting, the children have recently been discovering 'movement' and this project is now extended to 'transport'. Staff have interesting conversations with children about the activities and the world about them. Most children use scissors competently but staff sometimes help children prematurely with tasks before they have had a good opportunity to experiment for themselves.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's physical development is generally good. The children are preparing for their sports day, they have lots of opportunity to explore physical activities, and they use a local tennis court and cricket ground. They undertake a variety of tasks and move in control with co-ordination with a regard to safety. Most children use scissors competently

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children's creative development is generally good Staff are very clear that any creative tasks the children undertake are all their own work. The children's work is valued and carefully displayed. They are encouraged to be proud of their work. Children will benefit from more opportunities to explore the properties of different materials for themselves and in turn learn to choose what materials are suitable for different tasks.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- ensure that mathematics is equally represented in the curriculum. Look for opportunities throughout the session to introduce children to mathematical concepts, especially making simple calculations and allow them to practice these skills regularly;
- encourage children to explore for themselves the properties of different materials and give them opportunities to choose suitable resources for activities based upon this knowledge;
- evaluate the benefit of each activity and ensure the activities challenge children sufficiently;
- use children's assessment records effectively to address individual learning needs.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.