



Office for Standards  
in Education

## NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 127285

DfES Number: 596347

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 18/03/2004  
Inspector Name Virginia Cooper

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care  
Setting Name Just Learning Day Nursery (Ragstone House)  
Setting Address 48 College Road  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME15 6SA

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Just Learning Ltd 2809756

### ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Just Learning Ltd  
Address 45 High Street  
West Malling  
Kent  
ME19 6QH

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public 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

Just Learning Day Nursery opened in 1998.

It operates from a large house located near Maidstone town centre. The younger children are cared for downstairs, and the three to five year olds are cared for upstairs. The nursery serves the local area.

There are currently 86 children from babies to pre-school aged children on roll. This includes 10 funded three-year-olds and 8 funded four-year-olds. Children attend a variety of sessions. The setting is not currently supporting any children with special needs, or who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens all year round. Sessions are from 08:00 until 18:00.

13 members of staff work with children. Over half the staff have an early years qualification to NVQ level 2 or 3.

The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

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

### How effective is the nursery education?

Children at Just Learning Day Nursery(Ragstone House) are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals, however there are weaknesses. Staff lack true understanding of how to use the Curriculum for the foundation stage to best effect.

The quality of teaching has significant weaknesses. Staff provide some interesting activities that the children really enjoy, they are excited by what is on offer and interested in their tasks. They are keen to talk about what they are doing and their achievements. The staff, however, are not confident using the curriculum and they rarely refer to the stepping-stones. The activities do relate to the six areas of learning, but many of the peripheral activities do not have any particular learning outcome for the staff to concentrate upon. Staff miss opportunities to extend children's learning and fail to record much of what they learn in the free choice activities. The quality of the children's assessment records is variable, many entries are not dated, there are gaps in the records, the information is not very detailed and plans do not build upon what the children already know, providing them with appropriate challenges to enhance their learning. Plans rarely show differentiation and do not highlight children's individual learning needs. Some children are insufficiently challenged and staff lack experience extending children's conversations and thinking processes.

The nursery leadership and management is generally good. The manager is supportive, however, reliable systems are not in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of the nursery education.

Parents are provided with lots of information about the nursery. They are invited to an open morning one Saturday a year to discuss their child's progress and look at their records. They are able to speak to their child's key worker at any time. The nursery complete, 'All about Me' documents that parents are able to contribute to, but actually rarely do.

### What is being done well?

- Children enjoy a range of activities that enable them to investigate and explore through interesting messy play.
- Children are able to make choices about the activities they undertake.
- The children are very sociable and chat easily with one another and the staff, they are keen to share their achievements.

### What needs to be improved?

- the staff knowledge of how to effectively use the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and their familiarity with the stepping-stones. In particular how to record children's progress and use these assessment records to plan activities that take account of what the child already knows and what they will benefit from learning next ensuring that all children are sufficiently challenged
- the opportunities for able children to practice more complex mathematical calculations
- the opportunities for children to independently choose appropriate resources to complete self-chosen projects, in particular activities that promote building and construction
- the involvement of staff in free play sessions taking full advantage of all learning opportunities; in particular how they might use skilful questioning to establish what children have understood and learnt and how they record this development
- the opportunities for parents to contribute to their child's assessment records.

#### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The progress made by the setting in response to the key issues in the last inspection report is limited.

The use of assessment to plan future activities for children based upon what they already know and can do is still proving difficult for staff.

The assessment records are variable and much of what the children learn is not recorded in sufficient detail.

Whilst parents can add to their child's assessment records there is little evidence that this is custom and practice. Staff are not pro-active encouraging this parental involvement.

Many of the activities lack a particular learning intention and plans do not highlight children's individual learning needs.

The staff have collected 'real' resources for the children to explore, for example shells.

Children's exposure to technology has improved.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are interested and really enjoy the various activities. They have formed good relationships. They are familiar with the routine and take responsibility when moving rooms and tidying up. They are keen to share their news and achievements with the staff and each other. Staff manage children's behaviour well, the children are encouraged to be well mannered and show kindness to one another. Children confidently express their own needs, but staff do not always respond to their requests.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Significant Weaknesses

Children speak clearly and confidently as they engage both adults and their friends in conversation. They listen attentively to stories, they ask lots of questions about the characters and plot. They understand that print carries meaning and regularly absorb themselves in books. Children can practice their writing skills during role play, but rarely do without encouragement. Staff introduce a new letter each fortnight, unfortunately they frequently forget to emphasise the sound the letter makes.

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Significant Weaknesses

Children regularly count up to ten and sing number rhymes. Children learn about shape, size and quantity through practical activities such as puzzles. Three-dimensional shapes are rarely presented and staff are not using the correct mathematical names regularly. A different number is explored each week, however, staff are not referring to children's assessment records and the result is that more able children are insufficiently challenged and bored. All calculations undertaken are very simple.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Significant Weaknesses

Children enjoy a range of activities that help them investigate and explore their environment, however staff miss many opportunities to extend this natural curiosity, and what they learn independently is rarely recorded. Children cannot easily access all the resources and tools they may need for self-chosen projects particularly to design, build and construct. Most children use hand-held tools competently. They are beginning to learn about the cultures and beliefs of themselves and others.

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Generally Good

Children enjoy outdoor play and are developing skills of running, hopping, jumping, throwing and catching using a range of physical play equipment. They confidently use climbing equipment. Staff do not have a particular focus when the children play outside. Projects have explored healthy lifestyles. Children regularly handle a variety of tools in painting, craft, sand, water and dough play, however assessment records do not distinguish easily the level of competency the children have achieved.

### **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Generally Good

Children undertake a range of craft activities when they explore different colours and textures through interesting messy play activities. They enjoy experimenting with paint. Most children recognise the different colours. Children are attentive when playing with musical instruments and express themselves exploring pitch, tone and rhythm. Many of the peripheral activities are creative but staff do not exploit these learning opportunities by joining in and helping children take the games further.

**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**

- improve staff knowledge of how to effectively use the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and their familiarity with the stepping-stones
- improve staff understanding and skill in recording children's progress
- ensure that assessment records are sufficiently detailed and staff use this information to plan activities that take account of what the child already knows and what they will benefit from learning next ensuring that all children are sufficiently challenged
- ensure staff are aware of the learning intention for the various activities and know about children's individual needs to enable them to focus the children's development appropriately
- provide opportunities for able children to practice more complex mathematical calculations
- provide opportunities for children to independently choose appropriate resources to complete self-chosen projects, in particular activities that promote building and construction
- improve the staff's knowledge and skill using open-ended questioning to expand children's knowledge and establish what children have understood and learnt ensuring that this is recorded
- provide opportunities for parents to contribute to their child's assessment records and encourage them to do this.

*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.*