



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 124937

DfES Number: 516616

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	14/07/2004
Inspector Name	Elizabeth Anne Coffey

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Full Day Care
Setting Name	Early Learners 2
Setting Address	Rear of 62 High Street Croydon Surrey CR0 1NA

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	Headstart Nursery Limited 02737715
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	Headstart Nursery Limited
Address	323 Durnsford Road London SW19 8EF

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

Early Learners 2 has been open since 1995. It is owned by Headstart Nursery Ltd, who also own one other registered facility in Croydon.

The nursery is situated close to Croydon town centre and is laid out on two floors, with an adjacent outside play space.

Babies and toddlers are cared for in two group rooms on the ground floor with nappy changing facilities incorporated within the group rooms. The kitchen, office and staff toilet facilities are also located on the ground floor. Pre-school aged children are cared for in one large group room on the first floor with adjacent children's toilets. There is a staff room which is also located on the first floor.

The day to day running of the nursery is currently overseen by the area manager who has a level 3 childcare qualification. There is a manager who also has a level 3 qualification. There is no named deputy. Two permanent members of staff are currently employed to work with the babies of whom one is working towards a level 3 qualification and one of whom is working towards a level 2 qualification. There is currently one permanent member of staff working with the toddlers who is working towards a level 2 qualification. There are currently three permanent members of staff working with the preschool group of whom one has a level 3 qualification, one has a level 2 qualification and one is unqualified.

Staff from other nurseries run by the provider, and agency staff are used to fill current vacant posts and to cover for staff leave to try to ensure that minimum staff: child ratios are met.

A cook is employed to prepare the children's lunchtime meal and also provides cover in the group rooms for staff breaks.

There are currently 58 children on roll. There are four funded 3-year-old children and nine funded 4-year-old children attending. Children with special educational needs and English as an additional language are included in the setting. Places are open to all children within the registered age group.

How good is the Day Care?

Early Learners 2 provides a satisfactory standard of care.

There is a daily routine which is flexible to meet children's individual needs. Sleeping and feeding schedules are adapted, where necessary, to accommodate babies' and young children's patterns. Staff turnover is high and some key vacancies are being covered by agency and other staff. Written staff recruitment and vetting procedures are poorly implemented.

Safety of the children is generally good. Children are well supervised and close attention is paid to children's safety and welfare both indoors and out. Facilities for nappy changing, potty training and hand washing at the setting however are limited. Some equipment is poorly maintained.

Children benefit from close interaction by staff. Staff sit with the children, play with them, talk to them and support and guide them in their activities. The atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming. Children are provided with a range of age appropriate activities. Children are happy to attend and confidently interact with both their peers and adults. Behaviour of the children is notably good.

Parents are given verbal and written information about the setting and its policies and procedures. Their views on how they wish their children to be cared for are welcomed and respected. However they are not kept well informed about day-to-day changes, such as changes in adults who are caring for their children.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the provider agreed to develop an operational plan and maintain a written record of all visitors. A comprehensive operational plan is in place that is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. There is now a visitors book in the reception area which is used to record the arrival and departure of visitors from the setting.

What is being done well?

- Staff are alert to the needs of babies and young children and interact with them in a caring supportive manner. They sit with the children at low tables, or on the floor and play with them and support them in their activities. They adapt the routine to meet children's individual feeding and sleeping patterns. They encourage babies and toddlers in their early walking and crawling attempts and provide opportunities for developing new skills.
- Behaviour of the children is good. There are realistic expectations of children's behaviour. Staff give children clear explanations as to what is acceptable behaviour and encourage the children to differentiate right from wrong as they mature. Older children are encouraged to help each other, to take turns, to be respectful and polite to each other and to share. Children demonstrate a good awareness of the rules of the setting and are keen to

share these with each other and with visitors to the setting.

- Children are provided with a healthy well balanced diet. Menus are planned to reflect cultural diversity and accommodate children's individual dietary needs. Mealtimes are a sociable, relaxed occasion where staff sit with the children and encourage good eating habits

What needs to be improved?

- implementation of the written recruitment procedures
- number of qualified, permanent staff working directly with the children
- level of compliance with regard to the number of children of different ages that are on roll
- standard of cleanliness and repair of some equipment
- assessment of available nappy changing, potty training, hand washing and laundry facilities in line with current Environmental Health Department and Health Authority recommendations
- maintenance of an up-to-date, factually correct record of adults who looked after the children.

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 must take the following actions by the date shown

Std	Action	Date
2	Ensure that the condition, relating the number of children within a specific age range that may be cared for at any one time, is met.	29/07/2004
1	Ensure that written procedures for appointing and vetting staff are fully implemented.	29/07/2004

2	Develop an action plan that sets out how required staffing levels and staff training and qualification requirements (including first aid) will be met.	29/07/2004
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The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
7	Ensure that nappy changing, potty training, hand washing and laundry facilities comply with current Environmental Health Department and Health Authority recommendations.
14	Ensure an up-to-date daily record of which adults looked after the children is readily accessible on the premises and available for inspection at all times.
5	Ensure that all toys and equipment are clean, well maintained and safe.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

Early Learners 2 Day Nursery provides acceptable quality nursery education, but has significant areas for improvement. The children's progress towards the early learning goals is limited by significant weaknesses, although there are some generally good aspects.

The quality of teaching has significant weaknesses. Staff do not have sound knowledge of the foundation stage of learning. They mostly miss opportunities to support and extend children's learning through spontaneous intervention and their lack of understanding of how children learn through play. Until recently, (May 2004) children's progress towards the early learning goals was not sufficiently or consistently monitored. Even though systems are now in place, they do not show how children have progressed, neither do they identify sufficient learning intentions to help children progress further.

Staff have a good understanding of children's individual care needs. They are affectionate and caring towards the children, who respond warmly. Staff encourage children to behave well and practice good manners and the children are polite and considerate towards each other. They have high levels of independence and older children are very confident, which is effectively encouraged by staff.

Leadership and management has significant weaknesses. Up until February 2004, there were no effective procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the provision and quality of teaching. Staff did not receive sufficient guidance, support or training. However, the recent commitment to improvement and the new pro-active initiation of a detailed action plan, shows a positive vision for the future.

The weaknesses in partnership with parents are in relation to the limited information they receive about children's progress towards the early learning goals. However, they are kept informed of topics and are given clear information about children's personal, social and emotional development.

What is being done well?

- Staff use good strategies to manage children's behaviour. They give children clear and consistent boundaries and the children are developing a good understanding of right and wrong. Staff's polite manner and use of praise to acknowledge positive behaviour sets a good example and the children behave similarly. They consistently apply good manners and are polite and considerate towards each other and adults.
- Planned, focussed activities, most notably adult directed creative activities and circle time are generally well supported and managed. When staff have a clear learning intention in mind, they effectively challenge the children, for example during a leaf printing activity children were encouraged to identify

the different textures of the leaves and at circle time the children were encouraged to recognise the weather conditions, which precipitated some worthwhile discussions.

- The introduction of the recording system in the home corner, whereby children identify their name and mark with a tick to show they have played there, helps develop their awareness of print being used for different purposes. The children know what to do and complete the task routinely.
- Staff's knowledge of the children's individual personal, social and emotional development is sound. They are clearly fond of the children and are affectionate in their responses to them.
- Children are encouraged to use their independence. They enjoy helping with routine tasks, such as laying the table for lunch and tidying away activities.
- The atmosphere is calm and the children play contentedly. They have excellent imagination and use it to organise their own games and to act out real and imaginary experiences.

What needs to be improved?

- staff's knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals to enable them to effectively plan the curriculum and provide support and sufficient challenges for all children
- methods for monitoring and assessing children's progress and development and the planning of next steps to help children progress further towards the early learning goals
- methods for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching
- resources to support older children's gross motor skills and the variety and presentation of role play resources
- opportunities for children to explore the natural and living world

What has improved since the last inspection?

Overall, the standard and quality of nursery education has significantly declined since the last inspection. However, in relation to the two key issues that were given, the group have made generally good progress.

Group sizes in the outdoor play area are now effectively monitored. Each group now has a set time to use the outdoor play area. Children play safely and are well supervised.

Three and four year olds now have a separate group story time from the two year olds. However, children are not always encouraged enough to participate in the story, share similar experiences and discuss the story afterwards. There are too few opportunities for children to look at books individually or in groups of two and three with staff.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are interested in learning and embrace activities with enthusiasm. They are confident and use their high levels of independence to initiate and organise their own games. The children are self motivated and attempt new challenges, but they are too often left unsupported and opportunities for them to extend their learning are missed by staff. Children behave well. They are polite and considerate and taught to share and take turns. They have close and well formed relationships with staff.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children are keen to communicate with adults and each other. They enjoy stories and are eager to contribute, but opportunities to extend children's interest through discussion are often missed by staff. Children recognise their first names and the names of others. Older children can write their names using well formed letters and some can link letters to sounds. However, older and more able children are not sufficiently challenged to enable continual progress.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children count confidently and are effectively encouraged through daily routines. Older children's learning is not extended to enable them to progress with early calculation. Although resources provide opportunities for children to explore shape, measure, volume, position, size and quantity, the lack of adult support and encouragement results in children often choosing alternative activities. Children use number language in context and acquired knowledge, in their play.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Older children use the computer mouse with skill and are eager to show younger children how to operate simple programmes. Children independently explore sand, water and some aspects of nature with enthusiasm, but activities overall do not provide enough opportunities for exploration of the natural and living world. Children build and construct purposeful models with good resources. They occasionally learn about the cultures and beliefs of others and regularly share their own experiences.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children use small tools and complex construction resources with developing skill. They have good fine motor skills. The outdoor play area provides limited space and high priority is given to providing opportunities for children to develop their co-ordination and large motor skills through team games which involve hopping, jumping, throwing and catching. There are insufficient climbing or balancing resources to meet the needs of older children.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
	Children use their imagination to act out real and imaginary experiences and enthusiastically participate in creative activities, but there are too few opportunities for them to freely design and create using chosen resources. Children can name basic shapes and know primary and some secondary colours, but activities are not consistently extended or supported. Children sing with gusto and enjoy using instruments, but opportunities for extended learning are not sufficiently explored.

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

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable but has some significant areas for improvement. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is limited by some significant weaknesses. The next inspection will take place in one to two years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- initiate a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching
- ensure that staff are provided with clear guidance, training and support to enable effective curriculum planning and monitoring of children's progress and development towards all six areas of the early learning goals

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.