

# The Strawberry Patch

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** EY245165  
**Inspection date** 11/01/2011  
**Inspector** Melanie Calway

**Setting address** Becketts Farm, Hempstead, Norfolk, NR25 6LB

**Telephone number** 01263 711229

**Email**

**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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## Description of the setting

The Strawberry Patch Nursery and Pre-school opened in 2003. It is a privately owned facility and operates from three main rooms in a log-cabin style building which is located on a retired family farm in the rural village of Hempstead just outside the town of Holt, Norfolk. Children have access to enclosed outdoor play areas, as well as a paddock and an orchard, which is used for 'Forest Schools' activities. The nursery is open each weekday from 8am to 6pm, all year round.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 98 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 124 children aged from birth to under five years on roll, some in part-time places. The provision also offers care to children over five years. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 22 members of staff, 18 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications (16 members of staff are qualified to Level 3, four have higher level qualifications and the owner and manager are working towards Foundation degrees). The setting is supported by the local authority.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children's individual needs are well met because staff use observations of their play and learning to plan for their progress. Children enjoy a stimulating and exciting environment which is well designed to promote their independence. Routines are flexible and meet the needs of all children, encouraging them to think for themselves and be active learners. The setting communicates well with parents who provide details of their children's home lives and interests. The nursery is committed to developing its good practice and has effective systems in place for self-evaluation.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop further the partnership with parents by encouraging them to add to the learning records their own knowledge of children's achievements
- identify learning priorities within the planning across all areas of learning.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Children are effectively safeguarded from the risk of abuse or neglect because all staff have undergone the necessary checks. Good systems are in place to ensure that any students or volunteers are well monitored and not left alone with children. There are three designated safeguarding officers and staff are aware of who to contact if they were to have any concerns about children's welfare. The whole team have recently undergone training in safeguarding procedures. Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Detailed risk assessments are carried out on all aspects of the nursery and daily checks of the outdoor and indoor environments ensure that they are safe for children. The nursery also uses external consultants to ensure that high safety standards are maintained. Security at the setting is good with keypad locks used to enter the different rooms. Fire protection equipment is in place and regular drills are carried out to ensure that the staff and children know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Children benefit from a spacious and attractive environment. Interesting displays make the rooms inviting for children. Resources are well organised to promote children's choice and independence. They are able to select from a wide range of resources stored in labelled boxes and activities which are well presented. In the creative area children are able to access resources to initiate their own projects, for example, making a 'light sabre' from recycled materials. The baby room provides babies with space to crawl and good quality low level furniture enables them to pull themselves up and sit together in a social group. Children of all ages have free access to the outside areas which provide them with exciting opportunities for investigation and exploration. Children are valued as individuals and staff encourage them to develop respect and understanding for each other in this inclusive environment.

Parents are well informed about the setting and information is exchanged on a daily basis about children's development. The key person system is effective and works on a 'buddy' basis so that there is always a point of contact for parents. Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their children and detailed information is obtained about children's family backgrounds and developmental starting points. Parents share information about special events in children's lives such as holidays and celebrations but they are not always contributing to the learning records their own knowledge of children's achievements. The nursery has good links with other local providers and shares information when children attend other settings to ensure effective continuity and progression. The management team have established good systems to evaluate their practice and use a range of methods, including on-going training and advice from external agencies to continuously improve the provision.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

Children make good progress in their learning and development. They are busily engaged throughout the day in a range of stimulating activities and show high levels of involvement and enjoyment. They are able to make choices and decisions in their play, for example they have free access to the outdoor areas and choose when to have their morning or afternoon snack. The key person system works well. Staff work in pairs to observe, record and plan for children's learning, using their observations of children's play to plan the next steps for their progress. This also enables more experienced members of staff to act as mentors for newer staff. However, the planning system does not always show how the next steps are planned for across all areas of learning and development.

Children communicate confidently with staff telling them about their experiences. They also communicate well with each other as they play in pairs or small groups or chat at the lunch table. Babies are encouraged to communicate and develop language skills through the use of simple signing and nursery rhymes. Staff interact sensitively with children encouraging their interactions at all levels. Writing materials are easily accessible and children are encouraged to write and make marks. In the baby room babies use chunky crayons on a large piece of paper taped to the floor and make patterns in shaving foam. Books and stories are available on demand. Staff use open ended questioning to encourage children to think for themselves. Simple French lessons are offered to those who want them. Counting is introduced as children place small world figures into circles and they become familiar with mathematical concepts through games involving shapes and puzzles. Children are learning about the world around them through many exciting opportunities for exploration and investigation. In the outside areas they can discover the properties of sand and water or engage in woodwork. Children are given the opportunity to take part in regular 'Forest School' activities which take place in the orchard and involve discovering and working with natural materials. Resource bags are used as a starting point for discussion and role play, getting children to think about what it might be like to go camping through the use of relevant props. Children become familiar with information technology and use the computer with confidence.

Children's creative development is fostered well. They are able to choose from a wide range of resources, in the well stocked craft area, to express themselves and respond using a range of media. Children are encouraged to talk about their feelings and their views are valued and recorded. For example, they say 'I am happy today. I don't know why. I just am.' Children use their imaginations to engage in role play as they play in the home corner or use cardboard boxes and cushions to make a train. Personal and social skills are particularly well promoted. Children are learning to be independent and make decisions as they take the lead in their play. They select equipment and put it away again. They respond readily to simple instructions such as fetching their own tissues. Children are able to gauge when they are able to achieve something on their own and when they may need support, saying to staff, 'I may need your help in a minute'. At lunch children hand round the cutlery and plates and help themselves from serving dishes. Babies learn

to feed independently, when able, and toddlers are able to serve themselves from the dishes. Adults provide good role models and encourage children to develop respect for each other saying, 'that was very very kind of you'. Children develop physical skills of coordination and control. They have plenty of space to move freely and are active for most of the day. Outside they have space to run, balance on planks, climb and explore the natural world during the 'Forest School' activities. There is also a hall for indoor physical activities.

Children's health is promoted well. They enjoy an active lifestyle and plenty of fresh air. Adults reinforce children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle by saying, for example, 'you are getting big strong muscles'. Children are offered a healthy snack of milk or water and fresh fruit with crumpets and honey or marmite, which they can spread themselves. A nutritious hot lunch is cooked on the premises and offered daily. In the summer months children can pick fresh vegetables from the garden and take them to the kitchen to be prepared. Water dispensers are in the rooms and babies can see their cups and point to them if they need a drink. There is a cot room for babies to sleep in comfort as well as a 'snuggle' area for them to nap. All the relevant information about children's health and dietary requirements is obtained from parents so that their needs can be fully met. Children learn about good hygiene through regular discussion, visits from a dental nurse and pictorial prompts in the bathroom. They learn about safety as they are given explanations as they play, for example, when attempting to climb into a tall cardboard box they are asked 'what do you think might happen if it falls over?'. Fire drills are explained at an appropriate level so they know why it is important to be able to evacuate the building. Children are forming good relationships with the staff and friendships with each other. They behave well because they are interested and motivated by the activities on offer. Adults promote good behaviour by being good role models and intervening if necessary to remind children about taking turns. Children are developing skills for the future as they learn to communicate, be independent and make decisions in their play and learning.

## Annex A: record of inspection judgements

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*  
*Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*  
*Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*  
*Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b> | 2 |
| The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement                                     | 2 |

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>            | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement         | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources   | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity                             | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding  | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships  | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers                                | 2 |

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

|  |   |
|--|---|
| The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
|--|---|

### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|--|---|
| <b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b> | 2 |
| The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning    | 2 |
| The extent to which children feel safe                           | 2 |
| The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles            | 2 |
| The extent to which children make a positive contribution        | 2 |
| The extent to which children develop skills for the future       | 2 |

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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met