

Head Start Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date 22/02/2011
Inspector Susan Marriott

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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

Head Start Day Nursery was registered under the present ownership in 2007 and is one of a small chain of four nurseries which are privately owned. It operates from a double-fronted Victorian house set in the grounds of a garden centre on the outskirts of Leighton Buzzard. The nursery is divided up into four age groups, with the younger children based upstairs and the older children downstairs. The nursery is open each weekday from 8am to 6pm throughout the year, with the exception of Bank Holidays. All children share access to a secure garden and a patio area for outdoor play. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register to provide a maximum of 61 places for children in the early years age group aged from three months to five years. The provision is also registered on both parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 138 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 38 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also children who speak English as an additional language. There are 19 members of staff, of whom 15 hold appropriate early years qualifications. A qualified cook is also employed to provide freshly prepared and cooked meals and snacks for the children.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

This is a very friendly, well-managed and inclusive nursery which genuinely strives for improvement. The experienced and dedicated staff team work conscientiously to deliver the true spirit of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff sustain mostly good quality interaction with children to draw learning from child-led play and promote positive attitudes to learning. Children make good progress in their learning and development, and observation and assessment systems track and secure progress. Most aspects of children's welfare are promoted well and there are good partnerships with parents and carers. Competent and capable leadership and effective self-evaluation secures the nursery's good capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure staff consistently implement existing measures to prevent the spread of infection during nappy changing routines
- increase the opportunities for children under two years to enjoy daily fresh air and play outdoors
- improve the organisation of meal times to support the development of children's independence skills, with particular reference to the provision of appropriate cutlery and, for older children, serving themselves.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's welfare is promoted well as the nursery has effective safeguarding procedures. Staff attend regular training and review their procedures to ensure that they keep up-to-date with this area of work. Appropriate vetting checks are carried out to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Regular risk assessments and daily checks are appropriately recorded and ensure that hazards are minimised. Good daily practice, such as ongoing explanations from staff, reinforces children's understanding of safety issues. For example, children are reminded to hold onto the handrail when climbing up the stairs. Good physical security prevents intruders entering the premises and the identity of visitors is checked before admitting them to the nursery. An appropriate record of visitors is kept and the times of arrival and departure are recorded.

The nursery owner is clearly making substantial investment in refurbishing the nursery and is creating an attractive learning environment which promotes children's progress towards the early learning goals. Equipment has been upgraded throughout the nursery, however, plans to improve the outdoor area have not yet been implemented. Staff generally make best use of the garden area, and available resources are used well, but the overall organisation of the nursery means that babies do not get out into the fresh air on a daily basis.

Management is committed to funding training to update staff knowledge and has a considered approach to change, steadily introducing improvements to the service through thorough self-evaluation in consultation with staff, parents and the advisory services. Staff hold appropriate levels of qualification and work very well as a team, helping to create a positive environment where children feel secure and happy. Staff have a clear understanding of anti-discrimination, enabling them to implement appropriate policies and provide a service which is inclusive for all children and their families. They work with parents and carers to ensure that they understand each child's individual needs, background and culture and are, therefore, able to meet their needs and promote children's awareness of individuality.

The nursery makes every effort to work in partnership with others to secure smooth transitions and continuity of care for children. The staff are alert to the early signs of needs of the children that could lead to later difficulties. They respond quickly and appropriately, involving other agencies as necessary. Parents receive thorough information about the setting and their children's progress, for example, through newsletters, daily talks with staff and review meetings with their child's key person. Staff observe each child at play in order to understand and support their individual well-being and development, enabling each key person and family to work together.

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

Children experience an enjoyable programme of learning and development at Head Start Nursery. They are mostly well-supported by the friendly and caring staff who work hard to meet their individual needs. Staff develop positive relationships, observe children and get to know them really well as individuals. They tune into children's interests and thoughts, tapping into what they know and are interested in, enabling them to respect and stimulate the children's learning effectively.

In the 'Happy Hedgehogs' room for babies, staff create a delightful environment where children are secure and carefully nurtured. The babies are encouraged to sit, crawl and walk, enabling them to make discoveries around them. General practice observed in this room is excellent and individual routines are respected. When a child is starting in the baby room, the parents are asked to fill out further information sheets with regards to bottle-feeding routines and sleeps, as well as finding out if the child has a particular comforter. A new weaning guide has been introduced to ensure that staff follow the same eating patterns that the children have at home. Staff attend to the children's needs with great care and diligence, creating a gentle, nurturing environment where genuine concern is shown for each child as an individual. For example, when children are persistently dribbling, staff promptly change the wet clothes for dry ones. They sing songs to them to sooth them to sleep and speak reassuringly to children as they wake. Staff are keen to share their recent experiences of introducing heuristic play baskets, where babies use all their senses to investigate and explore the many different materials and textures. Photographs show babies having fun exploring a large cardboard box. However, babies do not have daily access to fresh air. In practice, babies go into the garden two or three times a week and walks in the locality are dependent upon parents bringing in buggies and staff availability.

Children in the older 'Hedgehogs' room are engaged in purposeful play throughout the day and most staff interact well to support their learning. Caring staff join in with child-led play, extending language and vocabulary, and children are encouraged to explore to expand their learning. Children are able to select their own toys and play with them as they wish. For example, trains do not necessarily have to stay on a track but can be moved across to the sand or placed on the farm. However, staff do not consistently implement procedures to prevent the spread of infection when changing children in nappies, compromising children's health and well-being.

The 'Busy Bees' are aged between two and three years and are surrounded by colours and shapes. The 'Wise Owls' are the pre-school children and they are flooded by letters and numbers. Both of these rooms are bustling with purposeful activity which reflect the six areas of learning. Children's enjoyment is enhanced and their learning is effectively extended as staff join in appropriately with their play and discussions. Staff speak clearly and calmly at all times, asking open questions and continually extending children's understanding. They acknowledge children's achievements with praise and actively promote their independence. They include teaching about colours and counting in their commentary so that children

learn effectively through play-based activities. Group activities and songs contribute positively to the quality of the provision. Staff are alert to any children who may not be joining in and actively seek to include them in all activities. For example, when some children do not initially join the story group, staff encourage them to sit on their laps and check that the children can see the pictures. Staff promote inclusive behaviours through joining in with the familiar refrain and asking the children to actively participate in the telling of the tale.

The learning environment promotes children's progression towards the early learning goals. The space inside the premises is bright and thoughtfully set out, with distinct play areas which reflect the six areas of learning. The outside play area is used regularly to provide additional play opportunities for the children. Play and exploration is generally planned and purposeful and takes place both indoors and outdoors, with a balance of adult-led and child-led activities which result in children being active learners. The Owls have a rolling snack where they have the opportunity to cut their fruit and vegetables, butter their bread and select and pour their own drinks.

Staff clearly spend a lot of time and effort completing detailed planning sheets, and identified learning intentions are suitably matched to the criteria in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Information is gathered on entry to provide staff with a good quality baseline from which to measure children's progress. The children's learning adventure books contain delightful photographs and comments about their learning for parents to read. The information is in a format which clearly shows the progress made during the children's time at the nursery. Staff identify the next steps in children's learning through observations fed back into their planning, and the assessment records fully support staff in ensuring that children achieve as much as they can in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

Well-organised snack times in each room provide some good opportunities for children and adults to interact in small groups. At snack time, staff generally maximise the learning opportunities for promoting children's independence and discussion about healthy eating. For example, children pour their own drinks and make choices about what foods they will eat. However, staff impose their own preferences on some aspects of organisation at main meal times. Children over two-years-old are provided with inappropriate cutlery. For example, they try to eat their pasta and mince with a fork. Older children are unable to learn to take responsibility for appropriate portion sizes because staff serve onto plates before the children sit down to eat. Children's behaviour is managed well by the staff and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs. Children develop skills for the future as they become increasingly independent, share ideas and work together. For example, staff encourage children to try to fasten their own coats rather than doing the task for them. Children's self-esteem is promoted as they are offered opportunities to talk about themselves, their families and recent experiences.

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

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	3
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