

Hickory House Children's Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 127245
Inspection date 11/10/2011
Inspector Shanti Flynn

Setting address Brickfield Farm, Main Road, Longfield, Dartford, Kent, DA3 7PJ

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Type of setting Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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*.

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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

Hickory House Children's Day Nursery opened in 2000 and operates from two units in a purpose built single storey building. It is situated in Longfield, Kent. A maximum of 98 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6.30pm all year round, with the exception of public holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 96 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, children aged three and four years are funded for free early education. Children come mainly from the local area. The nursery currently supports a number of children who learn English as an additional language. The nursery employs 19 full time members of staff. Of these, 15 hold appropriate early years qualifications and five members of staff are working towards a qualification.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at Hickory House and make at least good progress in all areas of their learning. A key strength of the setting is the exceptional way in which staff interact with the children. A highly effective key person system enables the staff to get to know the children and their families very well. This means that they are able to plan activities and experiences that support the needs of individual children extremely well, including those learning English. Staff actively encourage children to become independent learners within a very safe and secure environment. They constantly evaluate and reflect on their own practice, showing an excellent capacity for improvement through generally rigorous self-evaluation.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- strengthening systems to monitor consistency of practice across the staff team in order to enhance observations and to ensure highly innovative practice is used across the nursery.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager and staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding and child protection procedures. This knowledge is further supported by robust recruitment checks, so that people employed to work with children are cleared as suitable to do so. The premises are very secure. Staff open the door only to people who they

can identify. Parents are fully aware of the need for caution too and follow required procedures. High quality risk assessments identify and prevent potential hazards, and daily checks of the environment and equipment help keep children safe. Children practise emergency evacuation procedures and learn how to keep themselves safe in the event of a fire.

The staff work well as a team under the guidance of an extremely passionate and highly organised manager. An effective self-evaluation process identifies areas for development and all staff work hard to achieve the best outcomes for children. For example, children and staff were actively involved together in redesigning the outdoor area. The result is a vibrant well-resourced learning environment, which the children use and enjoy daily. Effective communication and staff appraisals leads to a shared vision of how the nursery plans to move forward. Systems to check staff consistency of practice are not fully in place, however, for example, new ideas are not always fully taken on board by all staff. Currently, the nursery is working towards an award from Eco Schools. A committee comprising staff, children and parents has been set up to drive the project forward, again with the aim of improving outcomes for children.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. The nursery seeks feedback through questionnaires and regular communication with parents via newsletters, informal discussions and email. Recent feedback has led to a new system of all staff wearing name badges so they can be easily identified, and a board detailing staff absences so that parents know if their child's key person is unavailable. The highly effective key person system means that staff develop excellent relationships with children and their families. Children's record files are readily available for parents to share and take home so that they can be actively involved in their children's learning.

All children are welcomed at the nursery and the staff team are fully committed to equality of opportunity and inclusion. The nursery has a special educational needs coordinator who currently supports children with a variety of additional needs extremely well. Excellent links exist with the local school. These links help children make a smooth move from the nursery to school. Children regularly participate in community events, for example, singing at the harvest festival. This helps children to develop a strong sense of belonging and identity within their local community. The introduction of a system to allow children to play either indoors or outside as they choose, gives access to a wealth of learning opportunities. Children rapidly become independent learners. The excellent layout of the nursery and well-resourced environments allow children to explore, be curious and seek out new experiences. The nursery has invested in all-weather suits so that all children can play outside whatever the weather. This provision supports those children who learn better when outside, extremely well.

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

The nursery provides a nurturing and welcoming environment in which all children, including those with additional needs, thrive. Staff work hard to develop excellent relationships with children and their families. As a result, children are extremely happy, settled and secure whilst at the nursery.

Staff plan worthwhile and challenging activities following generally careful objective observation of the children. They note what children are interested in and record their achievements in order to plan what children need to do next. For example, a child playing in the sand was enjoying making pretend cakes, so a member of staff decided to plan a baking activity later that week. Such personal planning results in progressive learning.

Children thoroughly enjoy explorative active learning through play, getting the most out of the excellent environments created by the staff. Activities are set out for children to explore but children are also encouraged to choose their own resources to encourage independent learning. Resources are stored at child height and older children confidently ask for what they want to play with if not already put out.

All children have access to a wonderful outside area, which covers all required areas of learning. Children choose to play outdoors or inside and effective staff deployment means that they are always supervised. Skilful adults know when to step back so that children can develop their independent play. They know just when to intervene if necessary or to extend children's learning by joining in and asking thought provoking questions. Older children make great strides in learning to keep themselves safe through activities about road safety and visits from the local police. They enjoy recreating what they have learnt in the outside area, setting up roads and signs and using the wheeled toys.

Behaviour within the nursery is exemplary. Babies and young children benefit from familiar routines. Caring staff help them feel secure quickly, so they confidently approach these adults to play or seek comfort. Staff act as excellent role models in the way they speak calmly to each other and the children. Babies develop their language and communication skills rapidly by mimicking sounds and words. They show their delight by smiling and clapping. Staff encourage children to share and older children develop excellent friendships as they seek out friends to play with. The shared outside area allows children to mix with others from different age groups and to learn from each other.

Children thoroughly enjoy creative and imaginative activities, painting and using different materials to create works of art. They confidently use the computers and independently access the CD player to put on their favourite songs and rhymes. The children also use digital cameras to record the areas and activities they like within the nursery and staff use this information to plan the environment. In such ways, children make excellent use of their new skills. Children adopt healthy lifestyles readily through the provision of healthy meals and snacks. Older children serve their own meals at lunchtimes and this encourages them to try new foods and make independent choices. They relish taking on such responsibilities. Children help themselves to drinks throughout the day; babies are encouraged to drink regularly. Physical activity and fresh air are always available as children have access to the outside area whatever the weather. They delight in using the wheeled toys, climbing frame and garden. They particularly enjoy looking for bugs and exploring places in which these creatures hide. A football coach runs weekly sessions. Babies use this area within a secure section, which has been fenced. This enables them to have fresh air, observe and join in with the older children whilst still being safe.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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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