

Sycamore Day Nursery

Howlands, Welwyn Garden City, HERTFORDSHIRE, AL7 4HH

Inspection date	02/05/2013
Previous inspection date	15/08/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Monitoring of all aspects of practice to inform continuous improvement is rigorous and helps to ensure that action plans are well targeted and developments continue to be made where they have the greatest impact on children.
- An inspiring key person system supports a mutual sharing of information with parents, which is expertly used to benefit all aspects of children's care and development. Parent's views are extremely well incorporated so the individual needs of all children are superbly met.
- Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The thorough implementation of robust policies and detailed procedures successfully promotes children's safety and well-being.
- Skilled, knowledgeable staff and the excellent indoor and outdoor learning environments highly motivate and engage all children. This means children flourish and make excellent progress in their learning as they are provided with thought provoking activities and stimulating resources.
- Meticulous assessment and planning for children's individual progress means that children thrive in the nursery environment. They play a dynamic role in their learning and show high levels of confidence, self-esteem and a keenness to learn.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in all rooms and the outside learning environment.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager, deputy manager, team leaders and staff.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector looked at children's assessment records, planning documentation, the self-evaluation form and a range of other documentation, including a selection of policies and children's records.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day and from information in the nursery's own parental survey.

Inspector

Jane Mount

Full Report

Information about the setting

Sycamore Day Nursery was registered in 2003 and is one of the nurseries in the Child Base Limited nursery chain. It is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery operates from the ground floor of a purpose built premises in the grounds of the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. It is fully accessible to all children and each base room has their own fully enclosed outside area available for play.

The nursery employs 26 members of childcare staff. Of these, the majority hold early years qualifications at level 3 or above and this includes the manager who has Early Years Professional Status.

Sycamore Day Nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am to 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 105 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- continue enhancing further the excellent links with schools to maximise support for children's transitions to the very optimum.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff are experienced, highly skilled and dedicated practitioners. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is reflected in their outstanding practice. They provide a highly welcoming, child-centred environment that enables children to become independent and active learners. Staff are successful at motivating children to capture their interest because they are enthusiastic themselves. They encourage children to try new experiences, such as, mixing different coloured dry paints in sand, to observe the changes. The activity arouses children's curiosity and provides a wealth of opportunities to extend vocabulary about colour, shape and size, as well as providing a means to develop children's manipulative

skills. The activity is then extended with the introduction of water and children delight in making 'puddles' in the sand. They quickly realise the texture changes and the wet sand can be moulded. They are amazed when they realise it also feels cooler to the touch than dry sand. Children expand their vocabularies as they learn words like 'grainy' and 'sprinkle' and they discuss the changes to the powder paint as it also mixes with the water. Consequently, children demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning as they are motivated and eager to participate.

The quality of teaching is robust throughout the nursery. There is a highly effective key person system that ensures all staff use effective, targeted strategies and interventions to support learning that meets all children's individual needs. For example, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have their learning needs supported extremely well as the child's key person liaises with the nursery special educational needs coordinator and parents as well as other professionals. Also, highly effective strategies for children whose first language is not English ensure they are supported well, such as, asking parents to record some key words or phrases in the child's home language on small recordable talking devices. This offers children comfort and security and encourages them to take an active role in their learning. Great emphasis is placed on partnership working. Key persons work extremely closely with parents with ongoing communication to ensure they are equipped to meet children's needs. This relationship is forged while children and parents are completing the 'settling-in' visits and parents are actively involved with the initial and ongoing assessments of their children. High priority is given to involving parents in their children's learning. For example, when children participate in a floating and sinking activity in the nursery, parents have been encouraged to take a balloon home to try the same activity at bath time with their children. This develops a culture of sharing and working together to promote children's learning.

Children's progress is closely monitored through excellent observation and assessment systems that are sharply focused and clearly show children's progress. The information gained from these is then effectively used to plan the next steps in a child's learning. Information gained from these is used by staff to purposefully plan activities to extend and reinforce children's learning, which is relevant, meaningful and builds on children's current interests. For example, staff have implemented the use of mind maps, along with ongoing planning sheets. This means when children show an interest in an activity, observations can be taken and then activities can be effectively planned for. This ensures children make excellent progress in all aspects of their development and helps to ensure they are supported well to be ready for the next stages in their learning. Staff have high expectations for all children and create an inclusive, rich and stimulating environment. Play experiences are organised so they are inviting and enable children to make their own choices. As a result, children are thoroughly engrossed and engaged as they play and develop exemplary levels of concentration as they flourish in their development.

A free flow system enables children to freely move between the indoor and outdoor environments, taking their resources with them. Exceptionally good use is made of the outside area, as well as the inside area, to maximise opportunities for children's learning. For example, babies and very young children confidently move between the indoor and outdoor environment while practising their new found crawling and walking skills. They receive excellent support from staff and delight in using their senses as they explore sand

and water and excitedly clap hands when joining in with nursery rhymes. Slightly older children enthusiastically engage in creative play. They use their imaginations as they investigate the changes to colours when making a sensory table using different coloured paints and foam, which are then covered with see through film. Staff are skilled at extending children's language through listening and talking with them as they explore the different textures, making patterns with their fingers and talking about how the colours mix together. Older children develop confidence in their literacy skills as they write their names on the interactive white board. They show curiosity and interest when learning about the world around them and eagerly take part in scientific experiments when making paper mache volcanoes that erupt. Children are becoming confident communicators as they talk knowledgeably about the lifecycle of a frog when discussing how they are caring for the frog spawn that is slowly changing into tadpoles in the pre-school classroom.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

An exemplary key person and buddy or secondary system ensures that each child develops a strong relationship with staff and can form secure emotional attachments. Children exhibit high levels of self-assurance and self-esteem. This is because staff have an expert knowledge of the children in their care and go to considerable lengths to ensure their individual likes, needs and care routines are well met. New children and their parents are exceptionally well supported by staff to ensure a successful settling-in period that is tailored to the needs of each child and their family. This ensures children can feel safe as close bonds are formed. Highly effective systems are in place so staff can support children and prepare them for transitions, such as moving rooms within the nursery. For example, a meeting is arranged between the key person and the child's parents each time a child is transitioning to a new room. Also, staff work closely together and short visits are organised for children so they become familiar with their new surroundings and new key person.

Children are very sociable, confident and highly motivated. Behaviour is excellent and staff support children in managing their own behaviour, helping them to develop independence and make positive relationships. They play well together, negotiating and taking turns in play. In the outdoor learning environment they work together with water runs made from drainpipes, taking it in turns to pour water for plastic ducks to swim down. The nursery's 'golden values' are regularly discussed and children talk about using their 'listening ears' when it is story time. Children receive much praise and encouragement, which further supports their self-confidence and contributes to their feelings of security. Children's understanding of keeping safe is evident and staff help children gain an excellent awareness of safety as they explain and practise simple procedures. Younger children are supported in their play by staff who keep them safe. They are beginning to learn about safety as staff discuss potential hazards. For example, why it is important to roll the ball and not to throw it in case it knocks someone and hurts them. Resources outdoors, such as climbing frames with platforms and other large outdoor equipment, enable children to develop an understanding of risk through physical challenge, combined with careful supervision by staff. When children go for walks in the local community they wear high visibility jackets and older children can talk about the safety reasons for wearing them.

Children enjoy freshly prepared, well balanced and nutritious meals and snacks and relish the independence of learning to feed themselves. They are encouraged to try new foods and participate in activities where they learn about the benefits of healthy eating, such as exploring different foods using their senses. Mealtimes are social occasions with plenty of conversation, good manners and skills learnt. Outstanding practice fully promotes all aspects of children's good health. Fresh air opportunities are maximised within the nursery day with exceptional use made of the outside area to promote children's learning and develop their physical skills. Large and small muscle skills are extremely well provided for, with an extensive range of play equipment to extend and develop children's physical development. Staff teach children about the positive benefits of engaging in regular exercise and the effects of a healthy life style on their bodies. Children learn about how exercise can makes bones strong and enjoy using a light box to look at x-rays. Excellent attention is given to children's personal hygiene and they proudly show off their newly washed hands, discussing with each other why they have to wash them before they have their lunch. The routines in each room help promote healthy habits and children from a young age understand it is important to only drink water from their own water bottle. Good hygiene practices are reinforced through activities involving the handling and preparation of food. For example, when children are participating in cooking activities they learn it is important to wash their hands first.

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

The leadership and management of the provision are very strong. All staff demonstrate extremely high levels of enthusiasm and a professional outlook, with strong teamwork underpinning their approach and contributing to the nursery's success. The management team provide clear leadership and a strong focus on providing a high quality service. This results in staff who are highly motivated and who work extremely well together as a team. They all have an excellent knowledge of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and a secure understanding of their responsibilities to meet all of the requirements. Thorough recruitment and vetting processes and comprehensive induction systems ensure staff are suitable and clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. For example, all staff have a clear understanding of behaviour management strategies as they undertake relevant training and receive copies of the nursery's policies and procedures. Highly effective performance management systems, including annual performance development reviews and regular one to one meetings, along with mentoring, support the staff team and ensure constant improvement. Routine monitoring of staff practice ensures consistency in children's care and learning and is used as a way of identifying any training needs or areas for staff development. There are excellent opportunities for professional development as staff are positively encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge. Regular and extensive in-house and external training ensure staff are well-informed practitioners.

Arrangements for safeguarding children are very robust. The entire staff team have an exceptionally good understanding of child protection procedures and know how to

implement them to protect the children in their care from harm. For example, highly effective systems are in place to ensure staff are inducted in child protection procedures when they start at the nursery and they regularly update their knowledge through attending safeguarding training. This ensures they have a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities. All required documentation is in place and maintained to a high standard to protect children. For example, children's attendance is accurately recorded showing their times of arrival and departure and emergency contact details are obtained in case a child becomes ill and parents need to be contacted at short notice. Consequently, children's health and safety are protected. Children are closely supervised and staff are vigilant at all times to ensure the environment remains safe. Comprehensive risk assessments are completed for the premises and outings to monitor children's safety. Effective security systems, such as a coded door with buzzer, ensure children are protected as no unauthorised persons can gain access. Full closed circuit television monitoring ensures maximum safety for all staff and children.

The management team monitor and assess the quality of the provision and set realistic targets to drive improvement. The nursery operation plan, along with a rigorous self-evaluation process and action plans, are used to systematically identify the nursery's strengths and areas they wish to develop and enhance further. This also includes close scrutiny of the educational programme to ensure it has sufficient challenge and reflects the needs and aptitudes of all children who attend the nursery. All of the staff team actively contribute their views and opinions to the evaluation process and feedback is sought from parents and children. The nursery manager benefits from effective support from the company's area manager and childcare education coordinator. They help to closely monitor the nursery and this has a positive impact on continuous improvement.

Excellent partnerships with parents significantly contributes to children's well-being. Extensive ways are used to share information with parents to ensure children's care and learning needs are fully supported. There are frequent opportunities for parents to get actively involved and this strengthens relationships and ensures children's individual needs are effectively met. A parent forum group has also been set up and has been found to be a useful way of finding out the views and wishes of parents. Parents spoken to on the day of the inspection are extremely complimentary about the nursery and the service provided. They give wide ranging examples of how they have been supported by the staff team who are fully focused on the needs of the children. Partnership working with other agencies is well established and used to ensure children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported and have their specific needs met. Staff value children's backgrounds and their home languages with effective systems to help children and families with English as an additional language. Partnership working with other childcare professionals and sharing good practice has also been found to be beneficial with regular attendance at network meetings at the local children's centre. Links have been forged with local schools to help support children when moving on to school. The nursery is fully aware of the importance of good communication and partnership working to fully assist children and their families in the transition process. This as an area for consideration to extend links and liaise more closely to maximise the already excellent support for children's transitions to the very optimum.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY264541
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	910440
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	124
Number of children on roll	105
Name of provider	Child Base Limited
Date of previous inspection	15/08/2011
Telephone number	01707 326001

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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