

Apple Tree Day Care Nursery

304 Cressing Road, Braintree, ESSEX, CM7 3PG

Inspection date	04/09/2013
Previous inspection date	27/03/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	1
	Previous inspection:	2
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

- The exceptionally well thought out, and constantly developing, outdoor area is a striking, high quality feature at the setting with its imaginative use of space and the natural interest provided by trees and the landscape. Children develop their creativity, imagination and all the core skills they need to make outstanding progress in their future learning.
- Children play indoors, with a wealth of easily accessible resources at their disposal, or outside, making decisions and solving problems: therefore, they are active learners, confident and eager, and remain fully engaged at all times in largely self-chosen activities.
- The key person system is highly efficient; every child has a development profile and regular, thorough and accurate reports detailing their progress. Next steps in learning are extremely clear, so parents can be fully involved at home.
- Care for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a particular strength at the nursery; every child's unique requirements are very well known and understood, and support systems fully developed, so all children are fully included in all aspects of nursery life.
- Monitoring of the care and learning is highly professional and effective; this promotes outstanding practice as every staff member is secure in their role and contributes their skills to aid children's development.
- The partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents unfailingly praise the staff's approachability and are confident that children are safe, well cared for and make excellent progress in their learning.

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 interacted with, and observed, children at play and during routine care, in the various playrooms and in the outside area.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager, the deputy and room leaders, and other key personnel, and carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector viewed a sample of documentation, including evidence of staff suitability, certificates, a newsletter and children's developmental records.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of the views of parents gathered in advance of the inspection.

Inspector

Sarah Williams

Full Report

Information about the setting

Apple Tree Day Nursery opened in 1997. The setting operates from a converted bungalow and demountable classrooms, in Braintree, Essex. An enclosed area is available for outdoor play. The nursery is open five days a week from 7.45am until 6pm, including an after school club from 3pm until 6pm, all year round.

There are currently 70 children attending, of whom 57 are within the early years age range. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported, as are those who speak English as an additional language.

There are 14 members of staff, including the manager. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff holds Early Years Professional Status and the manager holds a level 5 qualification.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- explore further ways to extend the excellent educational programme for multicultural awareness and incorporating children's home language in routine care and activities, for example, by using non-verbal methods, such as sign language to promote further the extremely effective programme for developing communication in the nursery.

Inspection judgements

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

Children make outstanding progress at Apple Tree Nursery. They gain the range of skills and attitudes they will need for future learning because they play and interact in a highly stimulating, imaginatively planned and well-resourced, child-friendly environment. Children routinely choose where they would like to play and move freely between the indoor and outdoor spaces. This gives them superb opportunities to make choices and take decisions, structuring their own learning and working at their own pace. They are fully supported and well supervised by the highly dedicated and motivated, enthusiastic staff team, who are always on hand to provide encouragement and oversee safety, but are unobtrusive. This allows children to develop their critical thinking, form friendship groups and play cooperatively. They learn to share and take turns, and show consideration for one another. For example, a child does not hesitate to help his friend when he takes a tumble

and falls off his trike. Children remind one another, and staff, to wear their hats in the sunshine, so they don't get burnt.

The range of resources, expertly organised and presented, ensures that children are never short of exciting things to do. For example, in the garden they can explore the mud kitchen or large sand pit: this promotes their mathematical learning as they investigate weight, volume and capacity, as they fill and empty containers. The bug hotel and wildlife area provide insects and mini beasts to study. This is a superb resource for the first hand experiences, which inspire children to learn about the diversity in nature and different characteristics of living things. A recent development is the 'ocean' area with two full-size boats, murals and props with an aquatic theme. This is an outstanding, imaginative and innovative use of space and resources that children are drawn to. They climb in and out of the boats and pretend to swim, catch fish or escape from the sharks. The possibilities for imaginative, fantasy play are excellent. They learn new vocabulary, such as 'quayside' and 'lighthouse' and begin to make connections with their own lives as they recall journeys and holidays.

Toddlers and babies have a separate garden which allows them to play safely and securely, while still being able to see and interact with the older children. When they are ready they start to use the larger play area, carefully supervised, which provides a constant source of challenge through the wealth of new experiences they encounter.

Core provision includes exciting and stimulating art and craft activities, such as painting, using twigs and sponges as well as brushes. Collage and sticking, and free access to an imaginatively stocked unit for model making and design give children free rein to experiment with textures and colours. Babies enjoy a very well thought out, diverse programme of sensory activities to introduce them to different colours, tastes, sounds and textures in a safe and controlled way. Staff know that providing activities, such as jelly play, or exploring cooked, coloured pasta and cornflakes are safe and stimulating for babies and prepare them well for painting and gluing when they are ready to try these. They have a very wide selection of natural and household objects to complement the toys and books, helping babies discover and learn about the world around them by handling familiar objects, such as purses and scarves.

Children highly competently use a computer with a range of educational programmes, and become adept in mouse control as well as developing hand-eye coordination. Visual guides help them negotiate the different elements, such as the keyboard and mouse. Programmable toys are very exciting to use and extend children's understanding of the uses of technology in a fun way. This helps them learn to control them and make a connection with how their actions have an effect.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are exceptionally well-supported at the nursery. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has an excellent understanding of how to meet the needs of children who require additional support. She constantly researches and updates her knowledge so that she is exceptionally well informed: she works closely with parents and outside professionals such as the area SENCO to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities to allow every child to join in with the full range of activities. Where possible, resources are adapted or specially brought in to aid

children's engagement and help their development. For children who speak English as an additional language, dual language signs and books are provided. Staff learn key vocabulary so that they can meet children's needs and communicate with them. Some staff have knowledge of sign language and use this as a form of non-verbal communication. Consideration can be given to increasing the excellent use of this across the setting to help all children communicate.

Every child has a carefully compiled development profile charting their progress. These are consistently of a very high standard, extremely informative and detailed. Parents view them frequently and many add comments and ideas so that staff have a good idea of what the children like to do at home. A termly report is sent home, complementing the photographs and samples of work, children's comments and annotated observations contained in the development profiles. These reports are consistently very clearly written and precise. They accurately track children's progress very effectively, clearly showing how they have improved over time. For children aged two years, the progress check follows the same format, and the results are shared with parents, so any additional help required can be put in place without delay. At all stages, the manager assesses and tracks the progress of every individual child, and compares the results of groups of children, so that any gaps and inequalities are investigated and attended to.

Children are seen to be highly motivated and eager to join in, and fully engaged at all times in meaningful and productive activities, many of which are self-chosen. Two little girls sit in the writing area using paper and coloured pencils to practise their emergent writing. 'I've done my name' exclaims one child. She puts her work away in her drawer so she can show her mum later. Children, therefore, show their sense of belonging and confidence as they select and concentrate on tasks that interest them. They constantly assess the options on offer and make decisions as they learn from their time at the setting. In turn, staff are highly motivated, passionate, dedicated and inspire children with their enthusiasm, ensuring that they always spend their time productively and are well prepared for school when the time comes.

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

Children form exceptionally strong emotional attachments to the adults caring for them. This makes them feel safe and secure, and enables them to play and learn confidently and with growing independence. The highly efficient key person system provides every child with a development profile based on regular, thorough and accurate observations. These are used to compile reports detailing their development, and clearly showing progress over time. The next steps in learning are clearly written, enabling parents to be fully involved at home. This means that the partnership with parents is highly effective; parents report that they feel fully included at every stage, and that their contributions are valued.

Care for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a particular strength at the nursery. Every child's unique requirements are very well known and understood, and support systems are fully developed, so all children are fully included in all aspects of nursery life. The SENCO starts to plan for children before they begin attending, as soon as

the place is booked, so that any support plans and procedures are already in place. The SENCO support continues until children are settled into their school, so that children have exceptional continuity of care.

The environment provides children with opportunities to select their own play materials, choose where they play and for how long. This gives them an excellent chance to challenge themselves and manage risks in a safe and supported setting. Staff manage children's behaviour well as consistently applied strategies ensure children know what is expected of them. For example, they line up after a play session outside and are counted. Some children go home at this time so they listen for their names. Children's comments and views are recorded at every circle time, when they reflect on the previous session. Staff use this time to reinforce positive behaviour ideas, and the 'golden rules'. Children therefore grow in confidence because their self-esteem is always considered and they understand what is expected of them.

A high priority is given to security at the nursery, so children cannot leave unseen. All visitors are screened before entry and no person has unsupervised access to children without all checks and vetting procedures being completed. Thorough, effective risk assessments are in place for all areas of the setting, and any outings undertaken. Any faulty or dangerous equipment is removed and maintenance matters are attended to promptly, thus maintaining a consistently safe, exceptionally child-friendly environment.

Children are fully emotionally supported at all stages by the dedicated and committed staff caring for them. When they move up to the next room, a managed programme of visits and settling-in days eases any problems that may arise during the transition. As children from the rooms often join up at the end of the day, most children are familiar with all areas of the nursery and settle quickly into the new rooms and routines. New children settle quickly and develop a sense of belonging, as routines are simple and easy for them to understand. For children leaving to start school, activities and discussions are included in their transition programme, complementing the visits to their feeder schools, so they are fully independent and thoroughly well prepared for the changes ahead. Children talk positively about 'big school', and their hopes and ideas of what this will entail.

The chef ensures that children enjoy an imaginative and well thought out menu of generous and nutritious meals and snacks, prepared freshly on the premises. Children eagerly tuck into home-made fishcakes and fruity couscous after a busy morning playing in the garden. Staff help children use cutlery effectively and teach them good table behaviour and manners, by sitting at the tables and eating with them. There is an option for packed lunches if parents prefer, so all children's needs are met in terms of their individual food and drink requirements. Children can rest or sleep as they need to, either in a cot or on low beds or floor mats. The sleep areas are kept cool, and light covers ensure that babies and toddlers cannot overheat, keeping them healthy. Children use the bathrooms with increasing independence and posters remind them to wash their hands, helping to prevent the spread of infection.

Comprehensive policies, detailing exclusion periods for infectious conditions, are displayed and available to parents to view at all times. The manager is also always available to discuss children's health and well-being matters with parents, or to remind them of the

nursery's policies. Minor accidents and injuries are dealt with by qualified staff, and a record made. Very good systems are in place to keep children safe. For example, records are analysed frequently to see any emerging patterns and action is taken to prevent further accidents. Only prescribed medication is given, under meticulously controlled conditions, and a record made so that parents are aware of what doses children have had. This prevents any likelihood of overdosing and keeps children healthy.

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

The management team has exceptionally high aspirations for quality care and education at the nursery. They constantly analyse every aspect of the care and learning provided and strive for improvement by implementing changes, which are aimed at raising standards for children. This is achieved by a very strong culture of reflective practice and by all staff having a meaningful input into the action plan, so that everyone's ideas are valued and included. For example, the toddler's care room is due to be reorganised to make resources more easily accessible to children, and to improve the flow around the room. Time will be provided so that the staff involved will make the changes and monitor the impact it has, giving them ownership of the way the room operates. The standards of children's achievements are monitored very closely by the manager, who collates results from every key person's assessments. This indicates any areas where there may be a variation in standards between groups of children and enables action to be taken to close the gaps.

Staff supervision is rigorous, continuous and takes many forms. The manager observes informally as she spends time in every room, and feeds back to staff on what she sees. Additionally, every staff member has a chance to express their opinions on the practice of their colleagues, as well as the manager and deputy, in an ingenious, anonymised system known as 'two stars and a wish'. By this method, staff's strengths and weaknesses are identified and, together with formal appraisal meetings, training can be put in place where it is needed to provide continuous professional development. This innovative practice ensures staff remain motivated and have high morale as they feel part of a strong team.

Children are extremely well protected from harm as all staff are trained in safeguarding, to recognise and respond to the signs and symptoms of abuse. The manager takes lead responsibility for child protection and ensures that every staff member is confident and can keep the children in their care safe. Any existing injuries are recorded and followed up by discussions with parents. Parents can read the full safeguarding policy to reassure themselves that children are constantly safe and in very good hands. Volunteers and visitors are subject to clearly defined expectations and guidance, so they understand how they should behave within the setting, for example, regarding confidentiality and restricted use of mobile phones and cameras.

By assessing children early on, their specific needs are fully known and understood, and any additional support they may need is put in place without delay. This ensures all children make outstanding progress. The importance of a strong and effective partnership with parents is not underestimated. An excellent two-way flow of communication is

achieved by face to face discussions, newsletters, questionnaires and an open door policy, which means they can speak to staff or the manager whenever they wish to. Parents say they feel that staff are all approachable and that they can discuss anything. Parents feel very well informed about their child's care and development and can contribute with ideas and suggestions about what children do at home. Where outside professional help is required, the nursery has highly developed and effective working relationships in place, so there is no delay in supporting children.

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
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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	650048
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	908111
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	51
Number of children on roll	70
Name of provider	Just Like Home Day Nurseries Ltd
Date of previous inspection	27/03/2009
Telephone number	01376 321858

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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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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
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M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
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