

# Small Talk Nurseries Ltd.

85 Grove Lane, Handsworth, BIRMINGHAM, B21 9HF

## Inspection date

23/04/2014

Previous inspection date

13/11/2013

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

**This inspection:**

4

Previous inspection:

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## The quality and standards of the early years provision

### This provision is inadequate

- Leadership and management of the nursery is weak and ineffective in building a team that can work to maximise children's learning and development. This results in a demotivated staff team without the necessary skills to support children's progress.
- There is insufficient analysis of poor staff practice and the resulting negative impact this has for children's care, learning and well-being. Poor assessment, including the progress check at age two, and weak teaching fails to ensure that all children make adequate progress.
- Children's safety and well-being are not fully assured as a result of ineffective deployment of staff at break times and poor maintenance of fire-detection equipment.
- Records of staff vetting checks undertaken to assess suitability are inconsistent and fail to clearly indicate what level the clearances were and who they were undertaken by, compromising children's welfare.
- There is no suitably trained and skilled practitioner to take the lead on behaviour management and some procedures to support positive behaviour are not always age appropriate, particularly for younger, more inquisitive children.

### It has the following strengths

- Partnerships with parents are developing well to encourage their active involvement in their children's learning and development.

## 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 throughout the nursery, speaking and interacting with children as appropriate.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and spoke with the deputy and staff at appropriate times throughout the day.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation with the deputy manager.
- The inspector looked at documentation including children's records, learning and development information, accident records, staff suitability records and a selection of policies and procedures.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents from written comments obtained by the setting.

## Inspector

Patricia Webb

## **Full report**

### **Information about the setting**

Small Talk Nurseries Ltd was registered in 2010 on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery operates from the ground and first floors of a converted building in the Handsworth area of Birmingham and is privately owned and managed by a limited company. The nursery serves the local area and is accessible to all children. The provision consists of four main care bases with additional use of an internal garden room for active physical play. There is no outdoor play provision on site and children undertake regular visits to local parks and play venues. There are 13 members of staff in the nursery including, the two owners. There are 11 members of staff who hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The manager is qualified to level 5. One apprentice is working towards a qualification at level 2. The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 55 children on roll, 49 of whom are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of 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**

**The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take the following enforcement action:**

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice requiring the provider to:

ensure that systems for verifying staff suitability with regard to the vetting processes are effective and that records include details of the level of check and who obtained it.

**To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:**

- improve the arrangements for staff supervision to provide support, coaching and training, and foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork, encouraging the confidential discussion of, and appropriate response to, sensitive issues
- develop staff skills and practice to ensure children are offered quality learning experiences that promotes their progress towards the early learning goals
- conduct the progress check at age two in order to clearly identify a child's strengths and any areas where a child's progress may be less than expected
- ensure that the deployment of staff is effective in establishing sufficient supervision of children, particularly during staff breaks
- maintain fire-detection equipment in full working order at all times, including the smoke detectors
- ensure that risk assessments identify all aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis and include reference to when and by whom they have been checked and the risk removed or minimised, with particular reference to the smoke detectors
- appoint a named practitioner responsible for behaviour management, who is suitably qualified and trained to advise other staff on behaviour issues, and seek expert advice if necessary.

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

- improve current procedures for managing behaviour, using interventions that are age appropriate and understood by children and staff.

## Inspection judgements

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

The quality of teaching is variable and at times weak. While planning indicates that staff are conversant with the Early Years Foundation Stage and the areas of learning, the delivery of teaching is uninspired and fails to fully engage all children. This results in some children not receiving sufficient challenge in order to make good progress. Expectations for some children are at times unrealistic. For instance, some assessments for younger children refer to them attempting to write their names rather than staff supporting their acquisition of dexterity and coordination skills. Assessment is erratic and does not identify the progress and attainment of children. In particular, the progress check at age two fails to clearly identify children's key strengths and, does not ensure that any areas where a child may not be achieving are identified and discussed with parents.

Staff are not wholly confident or sufficiently skilled in using effective questioning or vocabulary to maximise children's learning opportunities. Some questioning is very mundane and repetitive as, for example, children are asked a number of times about the colour of the icing when coating the biscuits. Children are not always encouraged to develop their independence, test out problem solving skills or discover things for themselves. This is exemplified by adults mixing the icing for the biscuits and then over directing children during the activity. This means that opportunities for children to work out how much water to add, what consistency is best for icing and using different tools to coat the biscuits are not capitalised on, thwarting children's excitement as well as their scientific learning. This is due to weak planning, a lack of initiative and enthusiasm from staff, which senior staff show some awareness of, however, this is not effectively monitored by the manager. This also means that management cannot fully assure that children are gaining the necessary skills for entering the next phase of their early education, including the move to full-time school.

The nursery serves a diverse community, and the staffing reflects the cultural mix within the local area. Parents provide basic information about their children's needs, this is discussed with key persons, although much of this is not clearly recorded to inform assessments. The providers have developed strategies for encouraging parents to be actively involved in their children's learning and development and these are starting to be used to engage more parents. Some parents have attended creative workshops with their children, and their collaborative efforts are displayed, such as Valentine's Day cards and references to the Easter story in the entrance. Parents are also sharing some achievements from home, which staff are starting to add to children's learning and development records. In one example of good practice, a child's love of chocolate after being poorly was used to organise a trip to a commercial chocolate factory. They travelled on the bus and were excited by the exhibitions and processes. However, the planning and innovation that went into this activity are not evident frequently enough to ensure that children can experience this more regularly.

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

Recent changes to the staff team mean that some children's key persons have changed. However, in general, children relate positively to staff and seek out the adults for reassurance and comfort. Staff meet children's basic care needs, monitoring health needs and attending to minor accidents and injuries in a timely and caring way. They discuss emerging changes with parents as children reach specific milestones in their physical development. In particular, staff work with parents to promote toilet training and some aspects of self-care, including hand washing and the brushing of teeth. Resources in each care base are safe and suitable for each age range. Risk assessments are carried out each day, although staff are not always aware of how to manage possible hazards. For example, a number of smoke detectors continue to beep throughout the inspection, which normally indicates the need for a change of batteries. Neither staff nor the manager were able to confirm that these would be fully operational in the event of fire. The maintenance of the nursery is the responsibility of the owners, who are not available at present to attend to these swiftly. The malfunctioning smoke detectors place children and adults at risk and is also a breach in the Childcare Register requirements.

Due to recent staff changes, there is currently no lead practitioner who has the necessary skills or training to advise staff on managing children's behaviour. This also means that staff do not have support or guidance to fully identify and address any adverse behaviour. While children's general behaviour is acceptable, some specific behaviours, such as biting, are not always addressed swiftly as staff rely on children maturing past the behavioural phase rather than dealing with the behaviour. A further example is when younger children entered a room for older children, they show deep interest in the displays and try to explore rather than enthusiastically. Some staff show that they have limited awareness of using distraction and effective teaching to divert children away from becoming a little destructive in their eagerness. The staffing ratios are met, although, at times, the deployment of staff has a negative impact on the attention given to children. This is particularly evident during staff breaks and the lunchtime period. The lack of organisation results in staff having to call the manager to seek cover in order to attend to children's toileting needs or support them when they wake after their lunchtime nap. The manager then uses the CCTV system to locate available staff and direct them to where they are needed. This compromises children's overall safety and welfare when there are delays in attending to their needs.

Children enjoy their meal times as they eat freshly cooked meals provided by the cook whose entry into the rooms is greeted with smiles from the children. A recent environmental health visit awarded a five star certificate. The cook is diligent in liaising with staff to ensure children's specific dietary needs are known and adhered to in order to maintain their health. Children have healthy and nutritious snacks, and are able to help themselves to fresh drinking water throughout the day. Children also enjoy the active play in the garden room, burying themselves in the ball pool and engaging in imaginative play in the doctor's surgery, becoming aware of maintaining their own health and well-being. This is part of the improvement that was implemented following the last inspection.

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

**provision**

This inspection was prioritised following concerns about the provider's ability to safeguard children and the management of concerns about practice in the nursery. The inspection found that the provider did not fully comprehend the concerns raised by staff during a staff meeting about how younger children's behaviour was being managed, and therefore, did not act in a timely fashion. Staff acted appropriately in escalating their concerns. Once the manager had been made aware of the staff practice giving cause for concern, she took the appropriate action to safeguard children's welfare by following the existing policies and procedures and informing the provider. Generally, staff have a suitable knowledge and understanding of the action to be taken should they have child protection concerns about a child in their care. However, the leadership and management of the provision are weak and ineffective in developing a cohesive team approach. Staff morale is poor and some staff express concerns that their views are not being given due attention. Supervision meetings and appraisals are not effective in providing staff with the necessary support, training and coaching to improve practice and develop their skills. There is a lack of mutual support and team work, which hinders the development of continuous improvement in the nursery. As a result, staff lack enthusiasm, completing their basic duties in an uninspired fashion. The records of staff clearances undertaken to assess suitability are inconsistently completed, and some fail to clearly indicate what level the clearances were and who they were undertaken by. This is because the provider has not taken sufficient steps to verify existing checks from other employers and agencies for a small number of staff. This means that steps taken to ensure children's safety cannot be fully assured and is in direct conflict with the nursery's own Disclosure and Barring Checks policy and procedures. These significant weaknesses in practice are breaches of the safeguarding requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and are also breaches of the requirements of the Childcare Register.

The manager confirms that some aspects of management are not as effective as they should be, particularly regarding the development of a cohesive team. Systems for monitoring practice and bringing about improvement are ineffective. This means that weak teaching and the erratic assessment of children's progress, particularly the progress check for children between the ages of two and three years, are not identified or dealt with. The manager is not confident in leading the staff because systems to support her professional development and support the implementation of any actions to deal with the weakness she has identified are ineffective. This is evident in the lack of established rotas to indicate who is on duty to cover staff breaks and when routines change. In addition, poor management results in an environment where basic duties are completed, but staff do not take responsibility or use their own initiative to extend, challenge and fully support children's learning and welfare. This hinders how well prepared children can be for the next steps in their learning and development. For example, when the manager notices staff on the CCTV system not preparing a care base adequately when children have woken up after their naps, she has to telephone up to the room to ask them to provide suitable activities and resources.

Self-evaluation is being developed by the owners, however, staff do not feel fully involved in the process. However, the manager believes that staff have been asked to contribute to

the reflection of practice and its impact on children's attainment. The views of parents are being sought and they are invited to join in with the various workshops, such as the creative workshop. This helps to raise their knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and how their children learn. Parents comment in some developmental records about the progress their children are making and demonstrate that they are made aware of some work they can do at home to promote their children's learning further. However, the unrealistic expectations that are expressed in some records mean that some home activities are not fully appropriate, for example, some activities refer to asking that younger children are supported in writing their names even though their physical development is not yet at the required stage for finer dexterity. Staff are successful in supporting children and families where additional intervention has been identified as necessary, and other agencies are involved in individual children's development.

### The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are

**Not Met  
(with  
actions)**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are

**Not Met  
(with  
actions)**

### To meet the requirements of the Childcare Register the provider must:

- provide effective systems to ensure that managers, staff and an any person in regular contact with children is suitable to work with children, which must include obtaining and enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)
- ensure that a risk assessment of the premises and equipment is conducted and that all necessary measures are taken to minimise any identified risks (compulsory part of the Childcare Register).
- provide effective systems to ensure that managers, staff and an any person in regular contact with children is suitable to work with children, which must include obtaining and enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check(voluntary part of the Childcare Register)
- ensure that a risk assessment of the premises and equipment is conducted and that all necessary measures are taken to minimise any identified risks (voluntary part of the Childcare Register).



## 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 | Requires improvement | The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.  |
| 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 monitored and inspected again within six 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

|                                    |                              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>     | EY390736                     |
| <b>Local authority</b>             | Birmingham                   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>           | 971536                       |
| <b>Type of provision</b>           |                              |
| <b>Registration category</b>       | Childcare - Non-Domestic     |
| <b>Age range of children</b>       | 0 - 17                       |
| <b>Total number of places</b>      | 30                           |
| <b>Number of children on roll</b>  | 55                           |
| <b>Name of provider</b>            | Small Talk Nurseries Limited |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 13/11/2013                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>            | 0121 5543445                 |

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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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