



Highbury Lodge Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146741
Inspection date	11 July 2006
Inspector	Jo Blackman / Susan Parker
Setting Address	11 Highbury Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 9RW
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Registered person	Child Base Limited
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Highbury Lodge Day Nursery opened as part of the Child Base national chain of nursery schools in April 2000 and is situated in a quiet residential area close to the town centre in Hitchin. The nursery operates on three floors with different ages of children on each level. There is a separate kitchen and the nursery has a large enclosed outdoor area. The group serves the local community and surrounding areas.

There are currently 126 children from 6 weeks to 5 years on roll. This include 33 funded three year olds and 13 funded four year old. The group has systems in place to support two children with learning difficulties and two children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is open five days a week all year round with the exception of bank holidays, from 08.00 until 18.00. The nursery is able to offer extended hours from 07.30 until 18.30. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are 25 members of staff working in the pre-school, of which six are part time. Over half of the staff have an early years qualification to NVQ level two or three and NNEB. There are four members of staff currently working towards a recognised early years qualification.

The nursery receives support from the local authority and teaching support is provided through the Child Base Company educational co-ordinator.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are good procedures in place to promote children's health. Staff obtain written permission for administering medication and seeking emergency treatment. They are trained in first aid and keep first aid boxes easily accessible in each room. They ensure that parents sign to acknowledge any treatment given to their children and there is a clear sickness policy in place. Children who are infectious are not allowed to attend the nursery so that others are protected. Babies sleep according to their needs in a separate sleep room and young children have a rest after lunch. Staff check all sleeping children regularly. All dietary information on children is displayed clearly in the kitchen so that all staff are aware of special diets. Therefore, children keep healthy. Staff are generally attentive to hygiene procedures. They wipe the tables before and after eating, use table cloths and individual place mats with the children's photograph and or name. However, hygiene procedures are not consistently followed in the cleaning of the baby room window sills and therefore, children's health is compromised. The cook has food hygiene training and keeps the kitchen clean and tidy. All children wash or wipe their hands before eating and they are becoming aware of why they need to wash hands when they have been to the toilet. Children's nappies are changed in a hygienic manner. Consequently children are becoming aware of good practices which help to keep them healthy.

Children have a healthy and varied diet. The meals are home cooked using fresh ingredients, for example, children enjoy chicken with a choice of vegetables at lunchtime. For tea they enjoy a variety of light meals including toasted sandwiches and raw vegetables. They eat well and particularly like the variety of fresh fruit available to them. The menus are rotated on a four-weekly basis so that children have a nutritious and balanced diet. Drinks are available throughout the day. Children have individual water bottles and cups which are clearly labelled with either their photograph or name. Whilst enjoying outside play children have independent access

to their water bottles in clearly defined drinking station areas. Children enjoy many good opportunities for physical activity, they are developing their skills outdoors through equipment such as, bikes and trikes, climbing and balancing apparatus, construction, role play and gardening areas. Babies especially enjoy using the purpose built separate decking area. All children have fun playing in the outside sand pit and in warm weather they have access to shaded areas in the garden. Staff are vigilant in applying appropriate sun protection and offering children shade under the many gazebos available.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment that is generally safe and secure. Staff carry out weekly and daily checks to ensure children's safety. There are adequate fire precautions in place around the building and procedures for evacuation are clearly displayed throughout the nursery. Children practise the evacuation plan on a monthly basis so that they know what to do in an emergency. Fire doors are fitted with a self-closing mechanism which operates when the alarm sounds. Therefore, during hot weather the internal doors can be left open whilst still ensuring that the children remain safe. The gates at the back of the premises are kept closed during outside play so that children can play safely. Parents and visitors use a secure system to gain entry to the nursery and all visitors are required to sign the visitor's book. However, children have access to hazards such as, broken staples left in the outside fencing and some trailing wires inside the nursery, therefore children's safety is compromised in these areas.

Children are becoming aware of how to keep themselves safe. Older children learn about road safety and know how to use tools carefully. Staff remind them about personal safety whenever necessary. An example of this is when children are using the stairs, staff consistently encourage them to hold the hand rail and hold the doors open for each other. The nursery has an appropriate child protection policy in place. However, the policy is not updated with information regarding the local Safeguarding Children Board. The manager has attended training and has all the necessary information to enable her to seek advice or report a concern. Staff are aware of the system for logging concerns and the child protection policy is available to all parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children show interest in the activities on offer. They particularly enjoy creative activities and like to explore different techniques, for example, hand and feet painting. They play with construction equipment, toy cars and animals and join in imaginative play with others in the home corner. Staff interact with children, talking and encouraging communication. Children are forming positive relationships with staff and benefit from their support. For example, children enjoy initiating an ad hoc singing activity with staff whilst playing in the garden. Babies and young children begin to make connections through exploring different objects in treasure baskets

and story bags. Babies are given opportunities to feel and explore different textures such as, natural materials and young children express feelings of delight when staff encourage them to discover the items in the bags whilst listening to the story of 'Winnie the Pooh'. Children take part enthusiastically in singing and music sessions, joining in with the actions. They show initiative in choosing resources during free play. Many like to share books with members of staff. Overall children spend their time purposefully.

Children are confident, developing good communication skills and are learning to be independent. They talk confidently with visitors and are keen to share their activities and involve adults in their play. For example, Inspectors enjoyed a game of rolling hoops initiated by the young children. Children have good opportunities to learn through their play. Staff use 'Birth to three matters' effectively in addition to their own 'SOUND Foundation' framework which successfully supports their practice. They make use of planning charts to record the activities and resources each week. This ensures that children have a wide range of learning experiences. Staff are keen to ensure that children are cared for in a bright and stimulating learning environment. Each room has an abundance of children's individual art work which is creatively displayed. The children's family photographs are displayed at their eye level, on rolling tins, home made books, wall displays and mobiles. Therefore, this encourages children to talk about their families and gives them a strong sense of belonging.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff use effective methods for assessing individual children, using this information to highlight the next steps in children's learning and development. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of the curriculum, their overall development is promoted because staff working in this area have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. However, the deployment of staff without a working knowledge of the curriculum, is not effective in promoting children's imagination and creativity. For example, a child taking part in a structured activity was discouraged from painting with her hands. Children have confidence in their surroundings, enthusiastically choosing resources from the wide range available. Planning of activities is comprehensive and staff ensure that all areas of learning are covered within these plans.

Children have good opportunities to develop their attitudes and dispositions enabling them to achieve well in their learning. They form good relationships with adults and other children and their independence is promoted as they are encouraged to self-select activities for themselves, which is developing high levels of confidence. For example, children are confident in initiating activities and conversation whilst involving staff in their play. Staff use their experience and knowledge to ensure that children are purposefully occupied and are offered challenge in their play, making good use of open questions to extend children's learning. For example, whilst enjoying a story about sea life children's thinking was encouraged by staff asking questions such as, 'Do you think this boat will float or sink?'

Children have continuous access to books and enjoy sharing stories with staff as well as independently. They enjoy sharing their home made books about their families

and pets with each other and staff are skilled at supporting this. Staff have also made books in relation to their family life and children enjoy finding out about this, one member of staff has made a book about her wedding and two children particularly enjoyed sharing this together whilst talking about the wedding pictures in the book. Children are learning to recognise familiar words as there is an abundance of labels and words around the nursery. However, staff must ensure that written labels are correctly spelt to enable children are to learn from these. Children are beginning to use numbers in a meaningful context and confidently using mathematical language in their daily play. Their understanding of mathematical concepts is enhanced as they are consistently offered a wide range of opportunities which includes learning about spatial awareness. For example, using various sized cardboard boxes for different uses such as, sitting in and wearing. This encourages children's use of mathematical language. Such as, on, in, heavy, light, full and empty.

Children have excellent opportunities to find out about the natural world through planned themes and topics. They are able to learn about nature through continuous observing and learning about the nursery's land snails and have had opportunities to develop their knowledge about other creatures through organised visits. The children are learning about technology through the use of play phones, computers, and cameras. Children's motor skills are promoted through different forms of movement, such as organised activities including music and the use of equipment. They have access to a wide variety of tools to promote their fine motor skills and are increasing their control by using a range of equipment, such as, scissors, pens and pouring drinks at snack time. Children are beginning to describe the texture and feel of things such as fabric, card, wool and sand and through their imaginative play, the children are able to use one object to represent another. For example, children use stickle bricks for glasses, earrings and eyebrows.

Children achieve well as a result of clear planning and assessment systems covering all areas of learning and effective teaching methods. Plans show how activities will be adapted to meet the individual needs and abilities of all children to ensure that they are all appropriately challenged. Staff are committed to supporting children's learning in all areas. Staff provide a vibrant and rich learning environment both inside and outside to engage children's interest and enable them to enjoy their play and learning experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are included in the activities provided. Staff make sure that children do not feel left out by inviting all children to take part in the adult-led activities. Children's self-esteem is promoted because staff enhance children's independence through praise and encouragement. All children are treated with equal concern, their sense of belonging is achieved through the many displays promoting the children's own home, family life, photographs and home made books. Older children's independence is promoted, for example, managing aprons by themselves, using the toilet and washing their hands. Younger children's independence is also promoted through staff support at meal times where children are developing good social skills.

Children are becoming aware of the wider world. They use exciting resources which reflect diversity and they take part in activities linked to cultural and religious festivals. Children talk happily with staff about their families and home life. Staff meet their individual needs effectively, for instance, helping children make cards for special family events. All children receive good support because staff show a caring attitude towards them therefore, helping to promote good relationships throughout. Staff have an awareness of the equal opportunities policy in place at the nursery. Children enjoy playing together, talking with each other and sharing toys happily. There are sound procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities which include employing one-to-one carers and liaising with outside agencies.

Children's behaviour is good throughout the nursery. They line up responsibly when moving between rooms and floors within the nursery. They are aware of their boundaries and show respect to staff and each other. Staff are excellent role models, they are calm and friendly which promotes a busy, happy atmosphere in the nursery with staff interacting and supporting children throughout the day. Positive behaviour strategies contribute to children working together harmoniously. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered because staff effectively encourage and promote children's manners and social skills.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive useful information about the provision, including details of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They are given a prospectus which includes full details of the nursery's policies, procedures and practice. A copy of planned activities are displayed on the appropriate notice boards so that parents are aware of what their children are involved in whilst at the setting. Parents also receive good information on how to extend their children's learning at home. For example, with recipes for making play dough and other activities their children may enjoy. Regular notices keep parents up to date with future nursery events. They are invited to participate in 'stay and play' sessions during the year where they can see the nursery in action and view their children's work whilst enjoying a specific activity with their children.

There is a strong commitment to involving parents in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are welcomed and staff ensure that they are aware of all policies and procedures. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through topical displays, regular discussions with staff and parent evenings. There are informative notice boards containing information about current themes, child development, extra curricular activities, and health and safety. There is a complaints procedure and log in place, which parents are aware of. The nursery's positive attitude ensures that parents views are valued, standards are maintained and appropriate care can be provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Documentation is well organised and generally provides a sound foundation for children's care and education. Attendance registers are well maintained. The

contracts with parents are completed appropriately and reviewed as necessary. Staff are well qualified and have a good knowledge and understanding of child development. Staff work hard to ensure that children are given time and choice, and encouraged to communicate, thereby developing independence. There is a rigorous induction procedure in place for new and returning staff, followed by regular appraisals. Staff are encouraged to access training according to their interests and to the setting's needs, for example, they have attended courses on the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They discuss issues and plan activities at regular staff meetings. Therefore their practice is continually improved through training and learning.

Staff make very good use of the available space so that children have plenty of room to move about freely and make choices. The play rooms are bright and colourful, with displays of children's artwork. Children can easily make choices from resources set out on tables, the floor or stored in low-level drawers and baskets. The garden area is organised into areas so that children can play with their age group or join with other age groups to enjoy the sand area, a larger hard-surfaced area, a grassy or bark area, depending on the activities on offer.

The leadership and management of the nursery is good. The manager and deputy manager promote teamwork and good practice throughout the nursery. They have good relationships with all staff and they work well together. They ensure that parents are fully aware of all aspects of the provision. Children's progress is clearly tracked through ongoing assessments and parents are kept well informed of this. Staff meet regularly to plan future work using information from assessments to inform this and to ensure that the needs of individual children are met and their development is promoted. Overall the management team works well in promoting good relationships and pursuing ongoing improvements in the setting.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection, the nursery were asked to address a maintenance issue in the babies sleep room, in relation to a damp patch. The nursery have addressed this issue, and implemented a checklist where the room is checked by staff on a daily basis before children arrive. There is no longer a maintenance issue in the sleep room, therefore children's welfare is promoted.

Complaints since the last inspection

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

There have been two complaints made to Ofsted since April 1st 2004.

On 16 June 2004 concerns were raised about key worker staff supervision and interaction with children. These concerns relate to National Standards 2: Organisation and 12: Partnership with Parents. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit to the premises on 22 June 2004 and found that key worker staff were not

reviewing information for parents. The provider was therefore given one action against National Standard 2 and two recommendations against National Standard 2 and 12. A response to the action was received on 19 July 2004 confirming that the provider had met the action given. The provider remained qualified for registration.

On 24 February 2006 concerns were raised about staffing ratios and the safety of the stair gates within the premises. These concerns relate to National Standard 1: Suitable Person, 2: Organisation 6: Safety and 12: Partnership with Parents. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit to the premises on 27 February 2006. The provider was not meeting National Standards 2 and therefore three actions were issued in relation to staffing. A response to the actions was received on 03 April 2006 confirming that the provider had met the actions given. The provider remained qualified for registration.

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On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that hygiene procedures are consistently followed (refers to the baby room)
- ensure that risks to children are minimised (refers to fencing and trailing leads)

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that all labelling is clearly written for children to see
- improve opportunities for children to develop their own creativity and imagination.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and*

concerns about inspectors' judgements which is available from Ofsted's website:
www.ofsted.gov.uk