



The Old School House Nursery II

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127702
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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?

The Old School House Nursery II has been registered since 1997 and is privately owned and managed. Children follow the Montessori philosophy and principles whilst also following the National Curriculum Foundation Stage.

The nursery operates from a self-contained building in the grounds of the owner's home in a rural area of St Michaels, near Tenterden. Children have access to secure, enclosed outside play areas. The nursery has a pet rabbit and the owner keeps horses in the nearby paddock.

A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. Currently these children are aged between two and five years. However, from January 2007 there will be provision for children aged under two years to attend the nursery.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00 all year round. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery serves the local area and surrounding area.

There are currently 59 children on roll aged from two to five years. Of these, 43 children receive funding for early education. The group supports children with additional needs and also children who speak English as an additional language.

Including the manager, nine staff work with the children. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years childcare qualifications including Montessori training.

The group receives support from the Local Authority Early Years advisory teacher and they are members of The Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in clean, comfortable and welcoming premises where there is a lot of natural light and good ventilation. Staff sustain very good levels of hygiene, helping to prevent the spread of infection and this promotes children's health and well-being. They pay good attention to their own personal hygiene, for example by wearing disposable gloves when preparing food and changing pull-ups. Children are developing an understanding of good hygiene practice. They help to keep their environment clean and tidy, putting things away when finished. For example, one child sweeps up sand from the floor with a small broom during sand play. Children know that washing their hands after using the toilet, handling the pet rabbits and before eating helps to "wash the germs away".

Children gain an understanding of healthy eating, as there is a range of fruit at snack time. They select from the fruit bowl and cut up the fruit for themselves. When they have finished they throw the core into the recycling bin and help to clear up. Parents provide a packed lunch for children who stay for the longer day. These are stored suitably in the kitchen. The nursery has a policy of healthy eating and parents are encouraged to provide nutritious food. Children choose where to sit at lunchtime and wait until all children are ready before starting the meal. Mealtimes are a sociable occasion where adults and children sit together. Children automatically say "please" and "thank you", their manners are good and they pour their own drinks.

Children enjoy regular daily physical exercise, which contributes to keeping them healthy. They use the nursery garden in good weather and go for walks around the owner's farm where they look at the horses and discover nature. There is a reasonable range of physical play equipment available for use in the garden. Children ride about on bikes, trucks and scooters on the tarmac area. They manoeuvre themselves around showing control and awareness of the whereabouts of other children. Staff join in with play and this enhances the children's enjoyment. However, children would benefit from a more stimulating outdoor play environment with more resources.

The grassed area is equipped with climbing frames and slides. Children enjoy climbing, tunnelling and sliding. They are competent when using the equipment. As this area is wet and muddy,

children put on coats and boots before going out to play. However, only children who have brought boots with them are able to use the grassed area. This means the exclusion of some children from this activity.

Good alternatives are in place to ensure that bad weather does not prevent children from taking part in daily exercise. The staff set up an obstacle course indoors and children move around confidently and safely. They walk on big footprints, go up and down small steps, balance on a low beam, climb on small frame and slide down, go through a tunnel and throw a ball into plastic bin. The staff help and assist children to go round the course encouraging them to be independent. Staff really make this activity enjoyable because they join in with the children and are enthusiastic.

Children use a very good selection of equipment and tools, which help to develop their manipulative and fine motor skills. They sort, measure, pour and transfer small objects, water, sand and rice between containers. Children show enjoyment, perseverance and concentration during their play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a spacious, well-maintained and cheerful environment. The nursery takes a holistic approach to caring for children. Children have a good understanding about their own and others safety. For example, they keep their environment safe by wiping up spills at snack time and helping to keep play areas tidy. Staff are vigilant regarding children's safety and take good precautions to ensure safety and security. Children have access to secure, fenced outside play areas. Staff check all areas and equipment before use to ensure children's safety.

A good range of high quality toys and equipment is available for children's play, many of which are Montessori materials. They meet the developing needs of all the children. A strong part of the nursery's philosophy is for children to care for and look after toys. Children automatically put away the equipment after use and older children help the younger ones if they forget. This means that they learn to look after their environment. Staff spend time thinking about how to set up the areas so they are interesting and stimulating. The well-organised resources and equipment means that children move around freely and safely. Because of the excellent self-selection, children develop choice and independence.

The manager understands her role in safeguarding children and has a clear child protection policy in place. However, neither she nor her senior staff have attended recent training. In addition, the procedures do not take account of the new Safeguarding Children's boards. Staff have up-to-date first aid qualifications and clear policies and procedures are in place. There are robust systems to administer and record any medication. As a result, the setting is able to act in the best interest of a child who is ill, has an accident or needs medication.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide variety of activities, which are interesting, stimulating and challenging. The combining of the Montessori Method alongside the Foundation Stage curriculum works well in practice. This ensures children participate in meaningful activities, which extend their play and learning. Children move about all areas freely and although each age group has own base room there is a lot of mixing of ages. The atmosphere is quietly busy with all children actively involved and absorbed in their play either alone, in small or large groups. As a result, they are happy, outgoing and confident

Staff have warm and positive relationships with all the children which ensures they feel secure. They support the children well by showing them how to use the equipment during activities. For example, when the children are making bookmarks she explains what they are going to make and shows children a completed one. Choosing from various coloured paper, glitter, paint and other art materials, children produce their own individual designs. This encourages children to experiment and use their imagination.

Children have good relationships with their peers. They play well together during activities taking turns and sharing toys and equipment. This reinforces important social skills and ensures cooperation. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of accommodating individual children's needs and interests. As a result, children respond well and are enthusiastic and keen to join in activities.

Younger children receive lots of affection and reassurance. Staff support children's emotional well-being and meet their individual needs well. Children have a clear bond with their key workers; they approach staff confidently and respond well to individual attention. Staff show a very caring attitude, do not raise their voices and join in during play. Consequently, children communicate their ideas and feelings.

Staff who work with the younger children have a good knowledge of child development. They understand the need for children to learn through play experiences and discuss ideas for activities as a staff team. Staff are aware of, but not yet fully working with, the Birth to three matters framework. The existing Montessori curriculum and detailed assessment covers the development of younger children well. However, with the introduction of the new baby unit in the New Year, it is important that staff familiarise themselves with the framework and begin to introduce it into the planning of daily activities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children achieve well, and are making good progress towards the early learning goals and the six areas of learning. This is because staff who work with the children in receipt of funding have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. They have attended training through both the Local Authority and the Montessori training centre. As a result, the setting provides a balanced curriculum. The manager and senior staff plan the curriculum together using both the Foundation Stage guidance and the Montessori Method of learning. Most of the planned activities offer challenges and the nursery has a

philosophy of assisting children towards learning. When a child has gained an understanding of how to use a piece of equipment, they are able to work by themselves, if they choose. This encourages independence and individualism. Children also enjoy working in groups and with staff. Good use of time, resources and space creates a busily occupied routine. However, there are some weaknesses in the outside play. Regular, ongoing assessments produce activities and experiences, which promote individual children's needs.

Children are achieving very well in personal, social and emotional development. They show a good deal of interest in activities and choose what they want to do. They are encouraged to experiment and use their imagination. Children concentrate and sit quietly during circle time, story and singing and staff ensure these activities are short enough to hold children's attention. Children are confident and attached to staff. Therefore, they feel able to express their feelings and opinions. For example, after helping to feed the rabbits, children talk about their pets at home. "My dog is brown ...my dog likes to go in the sea ... my dog eats meat". Staff take an active interest in the children's home life and this encourages good interaction between staff and the children. Children form good relationships with one another sharing and negotiating. Older children frequently help the younger ones, for example at snack time they help to cut up fruit. Children demonstrate high levels of self-care and independence when accessing the toilets, putting on coats and boots, and when selecting and clearing away toys.

Children's communication, language and literacy skills are successfully encouraged by staff. They extend children's learning through using open-ended questions and engaging children in conversations during activities. As a result, children are confident and clear communicators. During group time and story time children listen and concentrate well because staff hold children's attention effectively. There is a very good supply of books and children use the book areas well. They freely choose books putting them away when finished and this helps them to learn to respect books. During story time, children can all see the book and follow with interest. This helps them to understand that print carries a meaning. Children respond well to action songs, singing and rhymes. For example, they join in with noises to 'cock-a-doodle-do' and enjoy practicing songs for the Christmas concert. There are many opportunities for children to make and practice writing and some children are beginning to write their names independently. The mark making area is well equipped with good quality paper, pencils and sharpeners. Children identify their own names and familiar words. Good labelling of work, equipment and the children's trays helps children's language and literacy.

Children use mathematics very well during activities and daily routines. They use a lot of special Montessori equipment to solve practical problems and understand the concept of number. Children spontaneously incorporate counting during their play and they recognise and understand numbers. For example, a group of children using the sandpaper numbers demonstrate their knowledge by picking out which numbers represent their ages, line the numbers up in order and confidently count up to 10, and often more. To help children understand the concept of size, position, shape and quantity they use equipment like building blocks and graded materials. Children enjoy playing with the Russian-type Santa doll, which encourages them to consider size and sequence to make it fit together. One piece of play equipment that children use well is a train track, which they load with different sized and shaped cylinders and cubes. They consider and think about how to move the truck along the rail through a series of tunnel shapes. Children work and cooperate in order for it to reach the end.

Children demonstrate their creativity and imagination throughout their day. There are plenty of opportunities to explore texture, colour and shape during most of the activities. Children use a good range of construction materials and other tools. When playing with the sand, children describe what they feel as "cold and wet" and when using the playdough, as "sticky and soft". Children extend the activity with the dough as they pretend to make lunch, making sausages and other foodstuff. They enjoy role-play in the home corner and with the dressing up clothes. However, this area is rather cramped and the limited space means there is little room for many props. As a result, children only use this area in very small groups and the activity spills out into the main play area. Children use their imagination freely during art and craft activities and this produces work, which children create for themselves. Posters, photographs and samples of children's work on the walls help to make the environment bright and interesting. By displaying these at eye-level, children feel their work is valued. Children put their work into their trays to take home and share with their parents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are relaxed, settled and show a good attachment to staff. This is because they receive a good deal of individual attention throughout the day and this ensures they feel secure. Staff treat and respect children as individuals allowing them to work at their own pace. This, and the calm atmosphere in the nursery, is good for their confidence and self-esteem. Staff have a good understanding of equality issues and are fully committed to inclusion. Children with additional needs are well supported which ensures they join in all the activities. One member of staff has recently attended specialist training and she shares information with her colleagues. The nursery is confident in its ability to provide care for children with a range of abilities and needs. The premises are user-friendly with good facilities for disabled visitors, ramps to the front door and parking close by.

Children gain a knowledge and understanding of the world through a variety of projects, celebrations and play materials that reflect diversity and positive images. They enjoy nature and looking at living things. For example, children plant vegetables in the garden, look at the horses on walks around the farm and help to care for the nursery's rabbits. Children are confident with information technology equipment. They use the computer in small groups or individually and are familiar with the mouse. There are good opportunities for looking at difference, pattern and change during many of the activities. Children use various mediums with which to use their senses. They enjoy using sand, water, dough and paint on a regular basis. Children work in small groups to make Christmas cakes. They follow a recipe, measure ingredients and pour into the basin whereby they all take a turn to stir the mixture. Children describe what the fruit, flour and sugar look and feel like. Later while they are baking, children comment that the cakes smell 'nice'. They understand that later they will be able to taste the finished product. The nursery fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Staff help children to understand about right and wrong through discussion, explanation and example. When two children both want the same bike during play in the garden, a member of staff asks one child to wait until the other has had go. The child is happy with the request and happily waits. The member of staff then makes sure he gets his turn. Children show a caring

approach to other children and understand that they too have feelings. Older children often help younger children during activities. Children share well, wait turns and work together harmoniously when in groups. During craft, one child sits on another child's chair but readily moves when a member of staff points out the mistake. Children are familiar with the routine; they benefit from the high staff ratios and good amount of individual attention. Consequently, because staff have calm and consistent approach children's behaviour is very good.

Partnership with parents is good. The staff have a good understanding of the need to work closely with parents and are confident to approach parents as necessary to discuss progress and problems as they arise. As a result, parents share information readily about their children. When children go home they say "good afternoon" to staff before leaving with their parent. Parents wait outside for their children where they chat to other parents. However, in wet and cold weather they are not happy if they have to wait too long. Parents' positive feedback reflects their satisfaction with the care provided. They particularly like the daily contact books, which hold useful information about progress and development. Parents also appreciate that staff and key workers speak to them promptly if there is an issue to discuss. These good working relationships, which have developed, contribute significantly to children's care and wellbeing.

Parents of the children in receipt of early education funding receive good quality, well-produced written information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the six areas of learning. Staff observe children during activities and use their notes to assess achievement. These then transfer to children's folders and help inform parents regarding how their child is progressing individually. The owner feels it is important to consult with and listen to parents' opinions and views. Parents attend regular open days where they discuss with the staff their children's education. In addition, the manager provides a written report for each child each term for parents. This information helps to ensure that parents feel able to continue their child's education and learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The owner is fully involved in the management of the nursery and takes an active role. She has a good working relationship with her staff and delegates to her deputies in her absence. Staff organise time and resources well and spend a lot of time working with the children. This produces an environment where children are meaningfully busy and a routine, which flows naturally.

Written information and records relating to children are in place and appropriately maintained. Children's records are secure, shared with parents and are readily available. The nursery is aware of the importance for confidentiality and there is space to speak to parents and visitors privately in the office. Written policies and procedures are in place, which clearly state and reflect the service offered. Parents have their own modified version of the policies in the nursery prospectus.

Leadership and management are good. The manager and her staff recognise the importance of working together as a team. They have regular staff meetings where they discuss issues of childcare. The manager has a good management style and works alongside her staff offering support and guidance. She is aware of the need to evaluate and monitor the provision and does this by talking to parents and getting detailed feedback. Staff have the opportunity to discuss areas for improvement and self-development both as a team and during individual supervision

sessions with the manager. They are keen to attend training and develop further their knowledge. The managers is committed to making improvements and open to new ideas and ways of working. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care inspection, the provider has followed previous recommendations. Children now help themselves to water and pour their own drinks. Systems for staff supervision and appraisal are in place. Visitors sign in and out to show attendance and a review of the setting's policies has been carried out.

Since the last education inspection, the provider has followed the previous point for consideration. The planning has been updated so that early learning goals and the six areas of learning. This ensures that the Montessori curriculum merges with, and compliments, the Foundation Stage.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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.

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 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 staff access safeguarding children training
- develop the use of the Birth to three matters framework within the nursery to benefit the younger children

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):

- develop children's opportunities for outdoor play with regard to the resources and planning of stimulating areas
- consider developing the role-play and dressing up areas

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk