



Characters Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY332113
Inspection date	18 October 2006
Inspector	Christine Slaney
Setting Address	Richmond House, 49 Alma Road, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 4HE
Telephone number	01752 662 886
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Registered person	Characters
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?

Characters Nursery is located in the Stoke area of Plymouth, near Central Park. The nursery serves the surrounding city and areas. It operates from five rooms on the ground floor of a large two-storey building. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play. Meals and snacks are proved and cooked on the premises by a qualified cook.

The nursery opened in May 2006, is privately run and registered to provide full day care for 40 children from birth to under five years old. This includes no more than 21 children under three years and of these no more than nine may be under two. There are currently 34 Children on roll of whom six are funded three- and four-year-olds. Children attend a variety of sessions each week and the nursery supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are presently no children for whom English is an additional language.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday, from 08.00 until 18.00 all year round, although it is closed for the Christmas period. All staff, including the manager, are appropriately qualified. The group receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities, which contribute to their good health. They have daily use of a well prepared outside play area, to benefit from the fresh air. In addition they have many opportunities to explore and exercise, for example, climbing and sliding. As a result children are developing their large muscles and good co-ordination.

Overall, children have good opportunities to learn about their own hygiene needs and how to take responsibility for their own health. More able children independently access the toilets and wash and dry their hands. However, not all children routinely use the soap provided, particularly after playing with the nursery pet tortoise, although the risk is minor as the pet has been specially bred to ensure it is disease free. In addition the children do wash their hands before they eat their food.

Children have good opportunities to learn about healthy eating as they help prepare their own snacks, such as cutting up their own bananas at snack time. This is helping them develop a good awareness of healthy choices. In addition milk or water is offered at snack time and children have free access to drinking water at all times. Meals are freshly prepared by a qualified cook each day and where possible organic foods are used. Staff are aware of children's individual dietary needs and any allergies, as these are recorded at time of admission. This ensures that any food provided by the nursery is safe and suitable for their needs.

Children's health is further promoted by well-maintained accident and medication records, which also ensure confidentiality for all children. Staff regularly update their first aid qualifications and there is clearly written information for parents, for instance, an appropriate sickness policy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in bright, attractive rooms, which are well maintained with good space available for play both indoors and out. Children independently select activities from a wide range of toys and equipment, which are clean, well maintained and appropriate for their age and stage of development. This helps to ensure that they are safe for the children to use. Staff are encouraged to identify new resources, for example books around the 'space' theme have been purchased to support children's interest. However, there is a limited range of natural resources to inspire children and encourage them to explore their own environment. There is an enclosed outdoor play area, which is well planned and suitable for use, for example children play tents and log style sheds have been used to create an exciting environment to explore.

Staff are vigilant regarding the safety of children. Good security systems are firmly in place to protect them; for example, visitors are requested to sign in and outside doors and gates are secure. Therefore no person enters the building without the staff's awareness. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and potential risks clearly identified to ensure a safe environment. For instance, check lists are used to identify any potential hazards in the garden before children play. There are clear procedures for the emergency evacuation of the premises, for example, a fire procedure is clearly displayed. The use of appropriate documentation and policies further enhances safety for children, including policies like the lost or uncollected children policy.

Children's safety is further supported by the nursery's good understanding of child protection procedures, for instance, staff have an understanding of possible signs and symptoms of abuse. In addition, staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and an appropriate child protection policy and procedure is shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the nursery. They are happy, settled and keen learners. They settle to activities quickly and are confident and relaxed. The areas used are child friendly and organised effectively to promote children's own experiences. As a consequence, the children thoroughly enjoy a variety of activities prepared by the nursery.

Close and caring relationships are developed with children, parents and key staff. This is helping the children to develop a strong sense of self. Staff use full eye contact to interact with babies and young children. They watch carefully how children play and then skilfully extend babies' and young children's understanding. This enables the children to experience new things, for example babies rolling a soft ball along the floor, are then shown what happens if you post the ball through a long cardboard tube. This results in gleeful pleasure and babies soon start to copy the action of the adult, laughing with delight as the ball appears at the bottom of the tube.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage of education. The observations and assessments of the children are used to plan the curriculum. There are long and medium term plans, and daily plans are made based on the children's needs, development and interests, although these do not provide a clear overview of how all areas of the early learning goals are covered. Therefore there are some gaps in daily routines as some activities, like enjoying rhyming and rhythmic activities, are not regularly covered. Nevertheless, they do show the next steps of the children's learning, therefore children do make good progress in all areas of learning.

Children are confident and happy to speak in small groups during focused activities like counting and matching. They listen appropriately during sound lotto games and are starting to organise their thinking, for example they understand they need an addition wheel to make their space craft. Children feed and care for the nursery tortoise, learning how to handle it appropriately and what food and water their pet needs. They chat freely about home experiences. Children

are starting to recognise their names as they are encouraged to hang their own coat and select their name on arrival, depending on their stage of development. In addition, some children are starting to form recognisable patterns as writing paper and pens are freely available in meaningful situations like the shopping tent. They really enjoy playing in the craft area where they explore the texture and smell of soap flakes. They also print freely with paints in this area. In addition there is good labelling, which helps children to recognise the names of resources and equipment. Children do have some opportunities to use information technology through planned activities. In addition they have good opportunities to use tools and equipment for a purpose, for example they successfully cut up their own fruit at snack time and use scissors with good control.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The nursery has taken good steps to ensure that all children and parents feel welcome. Children are valued and respected as individuals. Their needs are well met as staff effectively record all care routines, like sleep and feeding patterns, and change of nappies. This follows the children's normal daily routine, as discussed with their parents.

Children benefit from the support of other professionals as the nursery works closely with other specialists to meet the needs of children and produce individual education plans for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Positive steps are taken to ensure the children are developing a view of the wider world and plans show there are suitable opportunities to gain an understanding of diversity through planned topics. Children also have access to a good range of resources, such as books and toys, which reflect positive images.

The staff are good role models, for instance staff actively promote good manners. As a result, children are well behaved and polite. Children settle quickly to activities and are developing a good understanding of sharing and taking responsibility for their own actions, for instance, children are involved in 'tidy up time'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. The nursery management is fully aware of the importance and benefits of developing effective communication and works very closely with parents. Relationships are friendly, informative and effective communication exists, for instance, there is an informal 'open door' policy. This results in parents feeling able to stay and 'chat', sharing information about their children.

Staff always take time to discuss the children's day with parents and regularly report on children's progress and development. In addition, there are opportunities for parents to learn about their children's progress, for instance, progress records are readily available. There are also useful notice boards for parents, which display the certificate of registration and the nursery's policies and procedures.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care needs are effectively identified and met through efficiently organised records and documents that are discussed and completed with parents. The required documents are well supported by the nursery's appropriate policies and procedures. Consents regarding emergency medical treatment and outings are obtained from parents. All documentation is securely and confidentially stored. All records are regularly reviewed to make sure they are up-to-date and remain relevant to the care provided for each child.

Children clearly benefit from their time in the nursery as all the staff are suitably qualified. The staff maintain safety by ensuring supervision at all times and there are suitable systems in place to ensure all staff working with children have completed required vetting procedures. Space is well organised, for example children are cared for in age related areas. This enables children to experience a good variety and range of play activities, suitable for their age range. Children are actively encouraged to choose activities and self select additional resources from low-level shelving, for example, books about space and craft materials.

The leadership and management is good. This has a positive impact on the education and care provided for children. For example, the new nursery manager has clearly identified the nursery's strengths and areas for improvement including improvements to the planning for the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage. The nursery's aims and objectives are clearly outlined in a developing operational plan. Staff meet regularly to discuss and evaluate curriculum planning and the nursery also receives support from the early years advisory teachers. Staff development and training is encouraged, for instance the new nursery manager has effectively negotiated whole house training, such as training on the Birth to three matters framework. The staff team are committed and consistently evaluate to ensure they are providing a good quality service for children and parents.

Assessment records are updated regularly. Children's achievements and developments are monitored appropriately. Staff are suitably qualified, and there is a strong commitment to staff training, for example all staff are expected to complete four training sessions a year. Policies and procedures are effective in promoting the welfare, care and learning of the children.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

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.

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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):

- provide a suitable range of natural resources to meet the developmental needs of the 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):

- ensure that all aspects of learning within the six areas are covered regularly and frequently, for example rhyming and rhythmic activities.

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