



Noah's Ark Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY294973
Inspection date	23 June 2005
Inspector	Deborah Jaqueline Newbury
Setting Address	Blackhorse House, Blackhorse Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 0RE
Telephone number	
E-mail	
Registered person	Caring Daycare 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark is a long-established private day nursery which became part of Caring Daycare in 2004, who operate 6 other nurseries. The nursery is situated in a semi-rural location on the outskirts of Woking in Surrey and draws its clientele from the local community and neighbouring towns. A maximum of 65 children under five years of age may attend the nursery at any one time.

Children are accommodated in three separate rooms within a spacious barn

conversion which also houses the nursery offices and kitchens. Each room has its own enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery is set within its own grounds, with woodlands and also incorporates a small children's farm. The farm has a number of small pets as well as ponies, cows and goats. The farm has a current veterinary certification.

The nursery opens five days a week (Monday to Friday) all year round excluding Christmas and Bank Holidays. Sessions are from 07:30 until 18:00.

There are currently 86 children, on roll aged from 0 to 5 years. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting makes provision for children with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

There are 23 members of staff who work with the children, 14 of whom have a recognised early years qualification. Six members of staff are on training programmes and induction. Twenty staff members hold a current first aid certificate.

Caring Daycare embrace the Montessori philosophy throughout the nursery, although a variety of teaching methods are used. They are members of the National Day Nurseries Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are learning the importance of personal hygiene as part of the daily routine and through the positive input and support of staff. Older children are independent in self-care skills. They take themselves to the toilet, put on aprons for messy play, and change their shoes for Wellington boots before going out for a walk in the woods. They display understanding of when and why they need to wash their hands. Staff provide younger children with appropriate support as they begin to become independent in their own personal care. They carefully meet the individual health care needs of babies. There are mostly suitable procedures in place to ensure cleanliness and hygiene throughout the nursery and thus, minimise risks to children and the potential for the spread of infection. However, currently, procedures for ensuring the cleanliness of the water cooler in one area of the nursery are not sufficiently well monitored which may impact adversely on children's good health.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious meals and snacks that meet their individual dietary needs and which take into account their likes and dislikes and parents' wishes. Food is plentiful and children enjoy it. They have regular drinks throughout the day. Staff working with babies liaise closely with their parents to ensure that they meet the changing feeding needs of babies and young children. For example, as they go through weaning and are ready to try foods of different textures. Staff feed babies according to their individual routines. Older children recognise when they are thirsty. Staff talk to them about the need to drink because of the hot weather and thus, they reinforce children's understanding. A written policy statement is displayed throughout all areas of the nursery to draw staff's attention to the importance of children having

access to drinking water, especially in hot weather, and of allowing older children to help themselves to this. However, existing practice means that children have to ask for drinks because there is no easily accessible drinking water available to them. There are no cups by the water cooler and staff do not take drinks outside when children are playing in the garden, despite the hot weather.

Children benefit from good opportunities to be outside in the fresh air. All children spend time out of doors each day, both in the well-equipped garden areas, and as they go on walks around the nursery's woodland area or visit the farm animals. Children enjoy exploring the varied range of outdoor play equipment available to them which is appropriate for their differing ages and stages of development and enables them to gain control of their bodies and practice and develop their skills. Some children independently manage the balance beams and stepping stones they encounter on their walk through the woods whilst staff offer help to those who require it. Babies and young children have sufficient space to move around freely and practice crawling and walking.

Babies and young children sleep in accordance with their individual needs and their parents' wishes. Staff regularly check sleeping children to ensure their safety and all children have their own bedding. Older children have periods of rest and relaxation throughout the day.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The nursery operates from a converted barn building and provides a pleasant environment for children and parents. Children have sufficient space to move around indoors and to sit and play in comfort and safety. The outdoor environment is child friendly, safe, and appealing. Children's safety receives good attention because staff supervise children well. They minimise potential dangers through risk assessment, daily safety checks of the premises and use of appropriate safety measures. Staff remain vigilant of children, for example, as they go for a walk through the woods. They undertake several headcounts and ensure that a member of staff is positioned at possible escape points. They make sure that seated babies are settled with cushions behind them to avoid the possibility of them falling backwards and hurting themselves.

Children learn the rules for their own safety and that of others because of the input and explanation of staff. For example, why they should walk indoors, not push one another and the importance of tucking their chairs in so other children will not trip over, "especially if they are carrying a glass." Children who find sticks when they are walking in the woods receive reminders about holding them carefully as a member of staff draws their attention to possible dangers. Children learn about sun safety as staff talk to them about keeping their hats on at all times and why they need to have sun cream on before they go outside to play in sunny weather.

Good security and fire safety precautions contribute to children's safety. The door to the nursery remains locked and staff control access. The display of a notice reminding parents not to allow anyone to enter the premises with them reinforces

their awareness of the role they play in also ensuring children's safety in the nursery. Children practice fire drills regularly and staff are aware of the procedures to follow.

Children use suitable furniture and equipment and have access to a variety of age appropriate play materials that are safe and suitable for their purpose. Staff regularly check resources to ensure they are safe for children to use. The nursery is in the process of extending its play provision and has identified areas for further development, for example the replacement of books, some of which are in poor condition.

Staff have a secure understanding of issues relating to child protection and the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about children's welfare. The company includes child protection as part of its rolling programme of training courses which means that all staff working with children either have already or will attend appropriate training. Staff are well-prepared to respond to emergencies or accidents involving children as a high percentage of the staff team holds an appropriate First Aid qualification.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children participate in a range of activities and experiences that support their play, learning and development. The nursery day offers all children opportunities to be active, spend time outside, and enjoy periods of rest and relaxation. They engage in free play and participate in creative and directed activities. Children are happy and content. They settle well and are secure, both within the nursery environment and with the adults caring for them. Warm relationships exist between children and staff which contribute to children's sense of belonging. Staff are kind and caring. They generally engage well with children but the quality of interaction and input of some staff members is, on occasions, variable, for example, when they are outside. This means that they miss opportunities to build on the experiences they offer children by participating fully in and extending their play and learning.

Some areas of the nursery, in particular the Montessori classroom used by the older children and the rooms occupied by younger babies, are bright and cheerful. Other rooms lack the same appeal. Toys and play materials are easily accessible by the children themselves in some rooms of the nursery although this is not consistent throughout. This restricts some children's independent choice about what they wish to do.

Staff have regard for young babies' individual routines and thus, they receive care that is consistent with their home routines. Staff sit on the floor alongside babies and play with them. Babies explore a variety of toys suited to their individual needs and engage in sensory play. The nursery is in the process of introducing the "Birth to Three Matters" framework of good practice to promote learning for younger children. Plans do not yet identify learning objectives for the activities children engage in but staff are developing their knowledge and use of this guidance through training and the support of management.

Nursery Education

The overall quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Staff working with funded children enjoy good relationships with them. They have attended training on the Foundation Stage curriculum and are familiar with this. Teaching comprises a mixture of Montessori and traditional methods and children spend time in two rooms. They are familiar with both. Children especially enjoy their time in the Montessori classroom where they freely explore the range of easily accessible resources. They make independent decisions about what they do and persevere to complete chosen tasks, with the support, where necessary, of the teacher working with them. They have less opportunity to make their own decisions about what they do when they are in the traditional classroom because resources are not so easily accessible. Staff working with funded children plan and present a variety of activities and experiences. However, some of these do not take into account children's levels of capability in some instances and, as a result, are insufficiently challenging. Staff currently use two different systems of monitoring children's progress although the nursery is in the process of introducing a new combined system for this. Staff are developing their use of planning and are sharing information and their knowledge of children.

Children relate to staff well, and are confident and self-assured. They behave well, taking turns and sharing. Whilst they display good levels of independence, they are not provided with consistent opportunities to develop these skills further. Children communicate freely and have the confidence to contribute thoughts, negotiate turns and ask questions of staff and each other. Some children write their own names, using correctly formed letters. They talk about the letters in their name, sounding these out phonetically. They enjoy listening to stories. Children display sound counting skills and have good colour and shape recognition. They match and sort shapes by size. They use mathematical language in conversation with others, for example as they talk about whether their glass is "half-full." However, they have insufficient opportunity to use and develop their problem solving skills through the daily routine and use of everyday activities. Children explore different media and materials. They operate the computer. They show interest in the caterpillars in the Montessori classroom and observe these closely, commenting on their "little black heads." They show awareness of the life cycle of the butterfly and understand that they need to wait for the caterpillars to change. Children move confidently and safely inside and outdoors. They avoid obstacles, change direction and adjust speed. They handle different tools with care, and have the capability to pour their own drinks. Children spend time in the messy play area every day. They play imaginatively with each other and make up games.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have opportunities to learn about themselves, others and the wider world through planned activities, access to appropriate resources and visitors to the setting. They explore their immediate environment including the farm and woodland area and mix with other children within the nursery. There are suitable procedures in place to ensure that children with special needs receive support and are able to participate

fully in the life of the nursery. The setting works in partnership with parents and outside agencies as appropriate to ensure they meet their individual needs.

Children are very secure and at ease, both in the nursery environment and with staff. They display a sense of belonging and older children enjoy friendships with one another. Children behave well. They are polite and show care and concern for each other. Some older children are beginning to recognise the needs of others, for example as they show awareness of the need to be quiet when the “little ones” are asleep or they will wake up. Staff have realistic expectations and a consistent approach to behaviour management. Their use of praise, positive language, and explanation supports children’s growing self-esteem and confidence and encourages a positive attitude towards others. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately.

Children benefit because of the effective relationships that exist between parents and staff. Parents are well informed about the provision and there is a good exchange of information about children. This practice ensures staff are aware of children’s individual and changing needs and that parents can feel fully involved in their children’s day. The nursery’s “Parent Link Group”, which is a forum for representative parents, nursery management and nursery parent staff to share and discuss issues demonstrates the nursery’s desire to work in partnership with parents and develop communication. Parents are very supportive of the nursery.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents of children in receipt of nursery education funding have access to information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and staff display the topic web and weekly activity plans. Parents have the opportunity to contribute to their children’s development records. The nursery is further developing its partnership with parents through the recent introduction of parents’ evenings to discuss children’s progress and achievements.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care needs are met through the generally effective organisation of the provision. Space is used appropriately, indoors and outside, to meet the individual needs of children and their age and stage of development, and the overall environment is welcoming. Currently, there are some inconsistencies in existing practice and identified policies, and in the nursery's procedures for monitoring some aspects of hygiene.

Required documentation and other records which contribute to the efficient and safe management of the provision and the safety, welfare and development of children are in place. Suitable recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are well protected and cared for by staff who have relevant knowledge, skills and experience. Staff receive ongoing support throughout their induction and probation period and the nursery's appraisal system identifies individuals' future training needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Caring Daycare took over the ownership of this nursery last year and is still in the process of developing and

building upon existing care practices and its delivery of nursery education. It has made several changes already to the organisation of some aspects of the nursery which are very positive, such as providing non-mobile and mobile babies with their own rooms and the development of its partnership with parents. It is strongly committed to the continued improvement of quality of care and education for all children. Staff are gaining knowledge of its policies and procedures and they are receiving good levels of support as senior management regularly spend time at the setting. The value of ongoing training is strongly recognised, both in terms of professional development for staff and in the enhancement of the quality of experience children receive. The company offers many opportunities for this. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following a visit to the nursery earlier this year, Ofsted requested that the registered person should ensure that the attendance register is actually maintained on the premises and that the arrival and departure time of each child is recorded. The nursery has addressed these issues appropriately. Staff now keep a record of the actual times children are on site and they keep copies of the attendance registers on the nursery premises, as well as forwarding a copy to the company's head office.

These measures contribute in positive ways to the safety of the children and the overall organisation of the childcare provision.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received a complaint in November 2004 regarding the standard of food offered to children and inadequate adult:child ratios in the baby room. Ofsted investigated these concerns by requesting the provider to complete an internal investigation and report back on its findings. The provider has supplied examples of menus and the nursery's policy on ingredients and additives. The provider has also detailed how the nursery is managing quantities of food offered to children and the availability of additional food if required. The provider has also provided evidence that the nursery is meeting required adult:child ratios.

An anonymous complaint was received in April 2005 concerning adult:child ratios. Ofsted investigated this concern by carrying out an unannounced inspection. The inspectors reviewed the premises, documentation, observed the care provided and discussed the concern with the provider. A recommendation under National Standard 14 (Organisation) was made that the registered person should ensure that the attendance register is actually maintained on the premises and that the arrival and departure time of each child is recorded.

Ofsted has taken no further action on either occasion. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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 children have access to drinks at all times, in particular, during hot weather and improve procedures for monitoring the cleanliness of the water cooler
- improve the presentation of some areas of the nursery indoors to ensure they are appealing to children and provide greater opportunities for children to independently select resources

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):

- make greater use of opportunities that arise as part of the daily routine and through everyday activities to build on children's skills and to challenge them further, in particular with regard to problem solving
- continue to develop planning and assessment procedures to ensure greater consistency between quality of teaching and expectations of children's learning

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