



Leapfrog Day Nursery (Braintree)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	405269
Inspection date	24 June 2005
Inspector	Susan Elizabeth Warren
Setting Address	Galleys Corner, Braintree Road, Cressing, Braintree, Essex, CM7 8GA
Telephone number	01376 344416
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Registered person	Leapfrog Day Nurseries (Trading) Ltd
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Leapfrog Nursery, Braintree is one of a national chain. It opened in 2001 and operates from a purpose-built building. It is situated on a small commercial estate near the A120 on the outskirts of Braintree, Essex. A maximum of 109 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.00 to

19.00 all year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 125 children aged from birth to under 5 years on roll. Of these 28 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area, both the local community and further afield. The nursery supports children with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language.

The children are cared for by 25 staff. More than half of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications, including the manager. Seven staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Older children are encouraged to help themselves to a drink of water at any time, cups and a jug are provided in the pre-school room in the form of a 'juice bar'. Toddlers' and babies' drinks are kept out of reach and are given by staff when they decide that children need them. Children are protected from the harmful effects of the sun by having sun cream applied and wearing sun hats, they do not use the outdoor area during the midday period as no shade is available.

Some children are encouraged to wash their hands before meals and after using the toilet, but this is not consistent throughout the nursery. Children are exposed to health risks when staff fail to be vigilant over some procedures, such as ensuring that bins and nappy disposal units have lids and are emptied regularly, and ensuring that toys taken into the toilet cubicles are removed and disinfected. Similarly, some floors, low level windows and wall surfaces are in many cases dirty and less than hygienic, exposing children to risk from harboured bacteria. Although a cleaning rota is in place, management checks fail to keep it running efficiently, as evidenced by the dirty floors, walls and glass surfaces seen during the inspection

Children are served meals and snacks prepared on the premises. Dietary needs and parental wishes are taken into consideration but procedures are not always observed, putting children at some risk of consuming unsuitable foods. Children are offered fresh fruit daily, usually at morning snack and afternoon tea time.

Outdoor play is limited to half hour timetabled slots twice daily for each age group. Older children lack challenges to develop their climbing and balancing skills as there is too little suitable equipment available. They enjoy using small equipment such as bats and balls, hoops and skittles.

Toddlers are limited in terms of 'making healthy choices', as suggested within the 'Birth to three matters' framework; activities are very structured and adult led resulting in the children having limited choices and decision making opportunities. It is inappropriate for this age group.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe and secure by the door entry system. They are cared for in rooms of acceptable size and with suitable child sized furniture. However, the environment is not maintained to an adequate standard of cleanliness.

Children see poor presentation of displays in some areas which detracts from the stimulation they might otherwise provide, and many are too high to be interactive or to offer useful learning opportunities.

Children have well developed routines and can negotiate stairs in the setting safely. Children are guided by staff to keep themselves safe and avoid accidental injury.

Children's welfare is generally well fostered within the setting by a child protection policy which is understood by most staff, though not all staff are aware of exact procedures to be followed in the event of any concerns arising.

Children take part in regular fire drills, though again staff knowledge of procedures is incomplete in some cases: staff moving to a new room are not informed of the procedures for that room.

Children generally have access to age appropriate toys and play equipment but this is stored haphazardly in some rooms and not adequately cleaned and maintained. Insufficient toys and equipment limit children's creative and imaginative play opportunities in the pre-school room.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Younger children have a planned programme of activities based on ideas from the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff have had some training in this framework and are beginning to use it. Currently this is more effective in the babies' room where ideas such as heuristic play are being introduced. However, for toddlers the planning is less effective as children are grouped, and expected to participate in adult directed activities, limiting their free choice and any exploratory possibilities. Children expressing an interest in an activity are not encouraged to participate but are told to stay within their adult determined group, a concept and method of organisation which is inappropriate for this age group.

Some activities are not age appropriate and have a negative effect, for example a painting activity where staff maintain control of the paint, offering the palette to children in turn and pre-determining which colours they may choose. A maths activity attempting to encourage two year olds to draw shapes was far too rigid and demanding and not backed up with practical exploratory interaction. These examples demonstrate a lack of understanding of the basic principles of 'Birth to three matters' whereby children should be enabled and encouraged to learn through active choices and play based activities. The planning sheet contains a section for evaluation, most

of these are not filled in. In many cases the daily plans are not followed.

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

Children in the pre-school room have well developed routines which they understand and follow well. They relate well to one another and form friendship groups as well as attachments to staff members. Children behave well and help to tidy up through the encouragement given to them by staff; rewards are in the form of a token chart which acts as an incentive. They respond to requests to wash their hands before lunch and to get ready for outside play.

A combination of free choice and some adult led activities provides a suitably balanced day, however, lack of variety of equipment limits achievement and development of creativity, for example within role play where dolls are provided but no clothes or accessories to dress them and put them to bed or feed them, and minimal props to encourage sustained or complex play. Resources for small world play are limited, again resulting in lack of stimulation to develop play scenarios. Children sometimes appear frustrated, (by lack of equipment) disengaged or bored, which can result in poor behaviour.

Physical development is limited as there is too little large equipment offering challenge. The outside play sessions are not planned or prepared with learning outcomes in mind, children simply have free play with a variety of wheeled toys and small equipment. Children enjoy music and movement sessions indoors.

Children have one to one help with writing and number work and they learn to write their names and form other letters however, teaching methods are on the whole unimaginative and lack variety. There is too much adult direction which results in lack of challenge and creative thinking. Staff tend to concentrate on the focused activity, usually craft based, and do not offer support to children or extend their learning for example in role play, construction or exploratory play.

Children have good opportunities to learn about the local community and the wider world through a programme of visits from 'people who help us' such as the police and fire service. They have use of sand and water but staff do not use these activities imaginatively to progress children's learning. Whilst systems for recording children's progress are in place these are not being used effectively to either record what children can do or to plan the next steps in their learning. Some children's records contain no entries even though children have been in the room for over six months. Others contain a few entries but these are often not dated or evidenced.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children in the pre-school room are encouraged to develop their self esteem as they carry out small tasks to help staff. They are encouraged to say please and thank you and to share and take turns, however, this is not consistent throughout the nursery. Although a key worker system is in place, this is used mainly as a way to organise how staff deal with parents. Staff do not use the key worker system to build

relationships with the children, for example nappy changing is done on a rota basis, not by children's key workers.

Birthdays are celebrated throughout the nursery, giving children a sense of belonging and value. Children know where to hang their coats and store their personal belongings, older children can get ready for outside play by finding their hats etc. A reward system is in place as an incentive to help with tidying up.

Some inconsistencies in behaviour management are confusing for children, for example at lunchtime when toddlers are asked: 'do you want me to get a highchair?' if they fail to sit still whilst waiting for lunch. This demonstrates a lack of understanding of the behaviour management policy within the nursery.

Children with special needs are given support and encouraged to take a full part in all activities; support from outside agencies is valued and used to good effect to work out individualised plans.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a strong partnership with parents; parents report that they feel well informed and find staff approachable and friendly. They value the newsletters which provide up to date information about changes and activities. Children in the pre-school room do not have accurate and up to date records of development and achievement so parents cannot be kept informed of their progress other than by verbal means.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered by the celebration of traditional and world festivals. The programme for personal, social and emotional development encourages attitudes and behaviours which reflect a tolerance for, and understanding of, differences between themselves and their peers.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The setting does not meet the needs of the range of children attending.

Children are cared for by staff who have undergone appropriate vetting procedures and ratios are normally maintained. There is a good level of qualification amongst staff and several are supported as they continue with training.

Though base rooms group children appropriately, at times group sizes exceed permitted numbers, for example at lunchtime when 20 under 2-year-olds were observed being fed together and 28 children were in the toddlers area. Some babies become distressed as over tired and unable to cope with the routines; staff have difficulty maintaining a calm and positive atmosphere. Toddlers are supervised at the start of the mealtime but towards the end staff leave them to cope alone as they became busy setting up beds. Children do not finish their meals once they are unsupervised in this way.

Other poorly organised aspects of the mealtime arrangement also contributes to some unnecessary waiting time for children as the food is presented in one container which has to be passed around four tables.

Although a system is in place for recording children's progress and development this is not implemented effectively and staff have no clear idea of each child's capabilities.

Team meetings are held regularly and staff have an opportunity to address concerns and issues as well as take part in in-house training.

Induction procedures are in place but these are not understood or applied consistently by managers. One member of staff had moved rooms and was unaware of the fire procedure in the baby room after one week.

Leadership and management is inadequate.

Management has failed to take effective steps to carry out improvements identified as key issues for action at the last nursery education inspection. Where steps were taken, for example in setting up a system to record children's development, these have not been monitored and are therefore ineffective.

Likewise recommendations from the last care inspection have been met only in part in some cases.

Staff report that they feel unsupported and their requests for equipment and toys, to support learning across the curriculum, are not met promptly and fully.

Staff in the pre-school room report that staffing levels make it difficult for them to find time for planning and record keeping, or to set up the outside area for a range of activities.

There is a lack of commitment to improve as staff in management positions have no clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses at the setting, nor how to make the necessary improvements to raise the standards of care and learning.

They fail to effectively monitor the quality of education provided or to implement the changes needed to raise standards, such as ensuring that staff have time to plan and set up activities, or to provide resources to support learning across the curriculum.

Improvements since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection is limited. The four key issues identified at the last nursery education inspection remain largely unaddressed. The recommendations and actions arising from the last care inspection have been met in part in some cases.

The child protection policy now includes details of what to do in the event of an allegation against a staff member.

Details of contacts for local child protection contacts are now included. Older children

have access to drinks at all times. Toddlers and babies are given drinks by staff as they feel it appropriate.

Behaviour management training has not been effective as there are inconsistencies amongst staff in handling children's behaviour, for example at lunchtime.

There is no further provision to extend children's physical development by the provision of climbing and balancing equipment.

The outside area is still poorly used as a teaching and learning resource. Children have limited sessions and these consist of random free play with wheeled toys and small equipment. A small climbing frame and slide provides little challenge to extend and develop skills for the older children. Litter blown in and left and a general air of unkemptness suggests the outside area is not valued as a resource. There is a plan to put some safety surface down at one end but in terms of using the outside as a teaching resource there is no evidence that staff plan activities other than free play as described.

A system is in place to record children's achievements and progress, however this is not done regularly or systematically and some children have no entries at all after many months in the room. Staff make observations and enter these against the appropriate stepping stone but do not date the entry. They do not identify the next stages of learning.

Teaching methods continue to be limited and narrow. Children are given one to one help with writing and whilst this is useful it is not followed through with practical opportunities to write for different purposes such as in the role play area. No theme and few resources mean that children's learning opportunities are limited within role play, drama and creative and imaginative play. For example, both sand trays contained dry sand, missing the opportunity to provide children with a contrast with wet sand, water or other tactile material.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been two complaints since the last inspection.

Concerns were raised regarding Std 2 (organisation), Std 6 (safety) and Std 7 (health).

The provider was asked to conduct an internal investigation on 02/12/04.

Following review of the provider's report, Ofsted decided to issue 2 actions under Std 7(Health) and Std 14(notification of significant incidents).

The provider remained qualified for registration.

Concerns were raised under Standard 7 relating to the health standards at the provision. An unannounced visit was conducted on 27 January 2005 to investigate our concerns. Further to the visit, the provider was required under Standard 14, to devise and implement a system to ensure that Ofsted is notified of any significant

incidents or events.

The provider remained qualified for registration.

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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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- show how children will be cared for in groups which do not exceed the maximum numbers as specified in the National Standards
- ensure that all areas of the setting are clean and that all staff are able to implement effective procedures to maintain good standards of health and hygiene throughout the day

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- review organisation of staffing and resources, including teaching methods, so that children are offered a full range of stimulating and challenging activities both indoors and outside to help them make all round progress. Ensure that developmental records are maintained and regularly updated so that staff know what individual children can do and what they need to do next

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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