

# Little Learners Pre-School Group

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	137321
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 September 2007
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<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional 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](http://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 outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Learners Pre-School was registered in 2001. It is part of a group of two pre-schools and one day nursery in the London Borough of Bromley. The pre-school is a privately owned group, employing a day to day manager. The group operates from a large hall situated in church premises in the London Borough of Bromley. There are associated toilets, kitchen and outdoor play area.

A maximum of 32 children between two and under five years old may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 to 12.15 during term-time only. The group offers education for 38 weeks each year.

There are currently 33 children roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school serves families from the local community. Children can attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

There is a team of five staff who work directly with the children. The manager is a qualified early years teacher and three other staff hold a qualification equivalent to a NVQ2 or NVQ3 in childcare. One member of staff is currently working towards a NVQ3 in childcare.

The group receives support from the local early years team and special educational needs co-ordinator. The pre-school is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children play in a very clean, hygienic setting as staff fully implement the group's in-depth policy and procedures each day. They clean the tables with anti-bacterial cleaner between use, remove any spilled paint from the floor safely, check the toilets are clean before, during and after the session. Staff wash their hands before preparing food for the children and wear a clean disposable apron and gloves for all nappy changes, helping to prevent the spread of infection.

Children generally use good hygiene routines throughout the session. They wash their hands, using liquid soap and paper towels after using the toilet. All children clean their hands before eating their snacks. Older children know this is to "prevent them catching germs". Children blow their nose on a tissue, disposing of this in a suitable bin. They all wash their hands in a bowl of water after 'messy' activities. However, staff do not change this regularly to prevent cross-contamination.

Children help to sweep up the spilt sand, throwing it away in a bin to prevent infection. Staff check the sand is suitable and safe for the children to use, regularly changing the sand available. All the children know the rules when they play with the sand. For example, they are aware it is dangerous to throw the sand as it may get into a child's eye.

Children benefit from the sound medication and accident procedures implemented by all staff. Staff label all medication required with the child's name and store it inaccessibly to the children. For example, an epipen is kept in the kitchen. Most staff are first aid qualified and trained to administer an epipen if required. All accidents and medication administered are fully recorded. Parents see the record.

Parents do not bring a sick child to the setting, helping to prevent the spread of infection. They telephone the group, explaining what is wrong with their child. This helps staff identify any potential concern e.g. diarrhoea and sickness bug. Staff keep parents informed of any contagious illness in the group. For example, they place a notice on the parent board relating to infections like chicken pox or conjunctivitis. Staff follow good procedures for informing parents if a child becomes unwell, during their time at the group.

All the children enjoy regular physical exercise indoors and outdoors. They enjoy playing with the parachute, large and small balls, bean bags and skipping ropes. Children move around imaginatively as they jog, hop, skip and jump as they sing 'The bear goes over the mountain'.

All the children freely access fresh drinking water each session. They know they must use a clean beaker for their drink to prevent the spread of infection.

Children enjoy healthy snacks during the morning. They are able to take their snack when they are ready as the group operate a snack bar system. Children enjoy the social occasion as they sit together in small groups, pouring their drink and selecting their fruit and plain biscuit. They are developing their understanding of the importance of healthy eating as staff discuss healthy

foods throughout the session. For example, staff and a child discussed carrots being healthy for you as they read a book together.

Staff are very aware of any specific dietary need in the group particularly ensuring all cooking activities are thoroughly discussed to ensure appropriate food is always available. For example, a parent brought in a special cheese for cooking as their child had a lactose intolerance. Staff are careful to include all the children. For example, children requiring a separate plate of food at party time are served at the same time as the other children, preventing them from feeling different.

The staff have particularly requested parents not to send in sweets or chocolate when their child has a birthday, suggesting an alternative of fruit or a small book. They no longer provide squash for the children to drink. They have made these changes in line with information received from the local health care trust. The dental hygienist is a regular visitor to the group helping the children to understand the importance of cleaning their teeth regularly and eating healthy foods.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Children spend their time in a very bright, airy, warm and welcoming environment. Staff work hard to make this child-orientated as they lay out and put away all the toys, activities and equipment every session. They warmly and cheerfully greet the parents and children by name as they arrive, making everyone feel part of the group. Staff innovatively display the children's artwork on large cardboard, using them as screens around the activities as limited space is available for wall displays. Colourful rugs for floor activities complete the setting.

Children have ample space to move around the room freely as staff leave sufficient space between the extensive range of daily activities, helping to prevent accidents. Staff organise the space well, providing suitable areas for playing, eating, resting, 'messy' activities, physical play and time outdoors. The equipment is bright and colourful particularly ensuring children with sight impairment are fully involved.

Children access an extensive range of activities, toys and equipment every session. The group has an excellent amount of equipment readily available on site, covering all areas of development for the children attending. The children benefit from the group swapping equipment with other member groups, enabling staff to maintain an exciting, stimulating and interesting environment at all times. All equipment is clean, safe and suitable for the children's use.

Staff implement the in-depth health and safety procedures at all times, keeping everyone safe and secure. Daily risk assessments ensure all the identified potential risks are made safe to prevent accidents. For example, all sockets are covered, heating is protected and the stage is inaccessible to the children. Staff do not take hot drinks into the play area and they use a suitable ladder to reach high equipment in the store room.

Staff maintain excellent security procedures throughout the session. They are vigilant at all times, particularly when taking children to the toilets. Staff lock the premises throughout the session and all visitors sign in and out of the building. Staff never leave visitors alone with the children. They closely monitor the door at arrival/departure times, ensuring children are unable to leave the premises unnoticed. Staff ensure the outdoor area is fully secure before allowing

the children outside to play. Excellent staff deployment throughout the session ensures the children's safety at all times.

Excellent fire safety arrangements ensure the children's safety in an emergency. All fire safety equipment is in place and regularly checked. Staff and children practise the fire drill regularly, often at no notice to the staff team. All staff are fully aware of their individual roles and responsibilities and excellent records are maintained, identifying any specific problem requiring attention. Staff ensure all children are involved in a fire drill by repeating them during the week.

Children are fully protected through the staff's excellent knowledge and understanding of managing child protection issues appropriately. The clear, informative policy and procedures ensure all staff are aware of their personal role and responsibilities towards safeguarding children. Parents are aware of the policy.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

All the children are keen and enthusiastic on arrival. They quickly separate from their carer, settling at an activity of their own choice. Many seek out the staff to share their new news or show them the toys they have brought to the group. They interact well with one another and the staff team. They respect one another, co-operating well with the staff, particularly when changing activities during the session, as they listen carefully to instructions.

Every child is developing good independence skills as they use the toilet, put on their own aprons for painting activities, dress themselves to go home or sweep up the spilt sand. They are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe as the staff and visiting policeman discuss 'stranger danger'. Older children are aware they may get hurt if they continue to sit in the goal when children are playing with the footballs.

The children enjoy a structured, balanced programme of activities each session. Staff use a flexible approach to incorporate visitors on a regular basis. For example, story time at the end of the session when the fire fighters attend.

Staff skilfully use a black doll puppet to help them, during the session. It reinforces messages to the children, getting them involved when the puppet pretends to have forgotten information. For example, children enthusiastically remind the doll of the importance of not going with anyone they do not know.

Innovative story telling, using props, keeps all the children enthralled. For example, maracas for squishy, squashy and water in a bottle for splish, splosh. Every child sat quietly as they listened to the 'Bear Hunt' story, enthusiastically joining in the refrain with gusto at the correct time.

### **Nursery Education**

All the children are making excellent progress towards the early learning goals. They are confident to try new activities and excitedly show staff their own snail creations from the dough. They confidently share their ideas, telling the policeman it is naughty to break or smash a window. Some know it is dangerous as they may cut themselves on the glass. Children concentrate for long periods of time particularly at activities of their own choosing. For example, several children sat for over 20 minutes making their models or completing a puzzle. All the children have made new friends at pre-school and look forward to playing with them. They

play well together, taking turns and sharing the equipment. For example, two children completed a number puzzle together taking turns to fit a piece of puzzle. Children respond differently when the policeman shows the group his handcuffs and baton. Children happily swap places in the group to ensure less able children can be fully involved in the activity, demonstrating their sensitivity to others. The children use good manners as they thank the policeman for coming and know they must not interrupt staff when they are talking to parents.

All the children are developing good language skills. They have good sentence construction, making themselves easily understood. They confidently negotiate with other children when they want a turn at the activity and enjoy depicting what will happen next at story time. They enthusiastically sing songs and rhymes, following the actions. They particularly enjoy 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes'. The leader uses the 'Vivian Gussin Paley' story telling technique. This includes every child at their own level of development and understanding, enabling staff to learn about each child's emotional needs and growth. Staff are developing the children's learning and understanding of the importance of books and reading. Children due to go to school enjoy one to one time, looking at easy to read books, developing their reading skills. Many can read simple sentences without help. Staff are helping children to develop a love of books as they develop their understanding of how to use them. All the children are keen to take their turn. Several children can write their own name, using recognisable letters in the correct order. All the children enjoy learning new words as the policeman described his uniform, for example, epilet. Other children described the spaghetti they were using as squidgy, squashy and sticky. One child recognised the word police on the front and back of his jacket.

A majority of the children can count to 10 and beyond with many counting to 21 at the registration table. Children recognise the numbers one to nine and can place them in the correct order. They discuss heavy and light when holding the policeman's belt and at the sand tray as they use an empty and full bucket. Children enjoy making their own patterns with paint and hand prints. They are learning about shapes as they discuss the balls being round and spherical. They discuss more or less when counting children on the mat or when they are using the abacus.

Children enthusiastically explore the items on the nature table. They enjoy putting the seashells to their ears, describing the sound they hear as 'listening to the sea'. They touch the acorns, bird's nest and starfish and love hunting for mini-beasts in the garden. Children discuss the patterns on the butterflies they see, reconstructing the image at the painting table. They explore a broad range of resources, developing all their senses. For example, feeling corn flour and water and smelling the cakes they have baked. All the children love to paint, mixing the colours provided to make new ones. They enjoy looking at the changes to the sand when they add water to it, learning about the different ways they can use it, for example, building sand-castles with the wet sand. All the children were keen to learn about the policeman's equipment and how it worked. Some were aware his walkie talkie could also be used as a mobile telephone. Many knew other people who wore a fluorescent jacket, helping them to be seen in the dark. The children knew he had put his helmet on back to front as the badge was not visible. Children competently use programmable toys on a regular basis. They particularly enjoy playing the simple games unaided. For example, they competently put the pieces of the rabbit together correctly. Older children know a zebra crossing is a safe place to cross the road and the crossing lady uses the lollypop sign as they play imaginatively with this equipment.

All the children move around the room confidently, ensuring they do not bump into one another as they pretend to be the bear going over the mountain. They have developed good control and co-ordination as they throw and catch a ball or hop, jump and jog around the room. They confidently move over, under the equipment and balance carefully using the balancing

equipment. Children develop their all round muscular skills through the extensive equipment readily available. For example, rolling out the dough, cutting the dough with scissors or holding a full bucket of sand.

Children have ample opportunities to develop their creative skills as they play. They explore different textures as they use sand, water and glue. Children build their own models and three dimensional shapes. They rhythmically clap to songs, following the leader and use their voices to sing tunefully to numerous songs and rhymes. The children play imaginatively in the home corner and dressing-up area. They make their own creations at the painting table and chalk board. Children suggest the policeman's baton looks like a torch or rolling pin and his special spray looks like a bottle of perfume. They enjoy using a wide selection of musical instruments, listening carefully as they learn to stop and start together.

The teaching and learning is outstanding.

Staff plan the curriculum using long, medium and short term plans, ensuring all areas of the Foundation Stage are incorporated equally. Topics are used linking stories, songs, art and craft and visitors to the group to help reinforce learning. Staff fully evaluate the plans each week, ensuring the children get the best opportunities from the activities provided. For example, they check what worked well and things needing improvement. All the staff are knowledgeable about the early learning goals, skilfully supporting the children's learning throughout the session. They use 'open' questions to help the children develop and think for themselves. They know every child well as they undertake regular observations, identifying the child's learning, development and next steps for progression. These are all incorporated into the weekly plans and activities. Each child's progress is carefully recorded in their personal booklet, enabling staff to write a detailed report for parents when their child leaves the group for school. The profile includes children's work since they started at the group, providing an excellent record of their overall development and progress. Parents can see the record at any time.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff make excellent use of the resources and equipment to promote equal opportunity at all times. Children freely play with the extensive range of equipment, depicting all areas of equal opportunities as they play. For example, disability figures in the dolls house, numerous books in the book rack and puzzles. Staff incorporate additional opportunities for developing the children's knowledge and understanding of other people and the world about them through their topic, themes and visitors to the setting. All the children access everything available. For example, boys play with the dolls house and girls build models with the construction toys.

Staff implement the group's policy and procedures. They ensure every child's individual needs are incorporated into the programme, for example, specific dietary needs. Notices in the setting are in different languages and Makaton signs help less able and new children understand the routine for the day.

New children settle quickly through the excellent procedures implemented by all staff. Every new child is fully supported when they start the group. A number of new children had settled within two weeks of attending the setting. They are confident to approach staff to ask for help and appeared to be enjoying their time playing with the children and different equipment with minimal support.

The leader ensures children with learning difficulties and special needs receive appropriate support relevant to their individual needs. She gathers detailed information from parents prior to the child attending, incorporating relevant information for managing children's individual needs. Staff give the parents and children excellent support. They work closely with other professional people to provide continuity of care. Staff have attended a range of training developing their awareness of specific disabilities. One to one support is readily available when required. Additional equipment is available, ensuring children with sight impairment can be fully involved, for example, very large books used for reading group stories and textured letters and numbers for developing mathematical and communication skills. Activities promoting language skills and communication include 'What's in the box?' and Makaton signing.

This is a positive approach. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

All the children behave well. Staff promote positive behaviour with regular rewards of stickers and praise and encouragement. Children use an egg timer to help them share the toys when necessary. For example, they took five minutes each to use the spade at the sand tray. Minimal behaviour management is required at any time as the children know the rules of the group. Staff calmly and consistently, implement the policy and rules of the group. Children share the toys and equipment well and are developing a clear understanding of right and wrong. For example, children told the policeman it is wrong to steal or burgle.

The partnership with parents is outstanding.

All parents are very happy with the care their child is receiving and many have siblings who have attended previously. They are well-informed and updated through regular notices, newsletters and discussion. Parents get involved in their child's learning as they are all fully aware of the groups topics and activities. For example, they know the policeman visited this week and that their child has been learning about Diwali or Hannukah. They know they must bring a labelled coat for their child to wear for outdoor play during the winter months.

Parents find the staff helpful, friendly, approachable and fantastic. They like the staff photographs in the foyer, enabling them to see exactly who are staff and identify the person they may want to speak to, for example, their child's key worker. Many have recommended the group to their friends. Parents are pleased with the excellent reports, relating to their children's development and progress. Some stated they are pleased with the way their children have been able to move to school with confidence. Parents have seen the complaints procedures and know they can ask to see a complaints record.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

A very suitable staff team cares for children. New staff undergo rigorous checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children and the majority of staff are qualified to NVQ3. Staff directly supervise all volunteers, keeping children safe and secure.

An excellent ratio of staff to children ensures children receive some one to one attention, during each session. The group has good contingency plans to ensure these ratios are maintained when staff become unwell or are attending training. All staff are fully aware of their individual role and responsibilities. They are well-deployed throughout the session. They all participate

in leading the group activities at some time each week, providing children with a range of experiences and enabling all staff to develop their story telling or music skills.

The group has an excellent overall operational plan which is fully implemented by all staff. It incorporates well-written in-depth policies and procedures, activity plans, equipment, staff rotas and training and development.

Staff operate a key worker system, ensuring every child has a named adult who is responsible for their care, progress and development. This helps children develop good relationships with staff, enabling them to develop confidence and self-esteem.

The group implements a good registration system, although one area requires attention. Children collect their name card on arrival. Staff use these to complete the register. An additional headcount and check is undertaken. Staff currently mark late arrivals and early leavers in the back of the register or a separate book. This system could be unclear in an emergency. Staff do not currently sign in and out of the group although the overall staff number is recorded.

Staff maintain excellent detailed records throughout the provision. All records and information are clearly organised and securely stored to maintain confidentiality.

The manager keeps abreast of any changes to the National Standards, implementing these immediately. For example, the complaints procedure and record book was immediately put into practice although neither have been required to date.

The leadership and management is outstanding.

The provider has a clear understanding of her personal responsibilities towards ensuring the group meets the National Standards at all times. She employs the best staff possible, undertaking regular staff appraisals to identify any specific training or development that would benefit the group and children. For example, staff attended Birth to three matters training to incorporate the needs of the two year old children effectively. She keeps in close contact with her manager, ensuring she is always fully aware of what is happening at any time.

The manager leads her staff team by example. She is an excellent role model and practitioner, enabling her staff to work to the highest level. The children's care and welfare is paramount to the team and they support the families and parents well. The manager has high expectations of her staff and works hard to keep them enthused and interested in their job. She constantly looks for new ideas to maintain a stimulating, exciting and interesting group for the children. Staff are fully aware of the group's strengths and are always open to new ideas to help them provide the best possible care for their children. They regularly attend training, cascading the information to other team members at staff meetings. The group has a clear vision to continue to move forward and embrace the changes to the National Standards. For example, attend training for the Foundation Stage and implement this in their setting.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The staff team have worked hard to make all the required improvements from the previous inspections. They developed a well-organised plan, identifying what needed to be done, how they could address each of the issues and when they had been completed.

There is now a suitable named deputy available to manage the group in the absence of the leader. This ensures the children's safety at all times.

Staff have worked hard to improve the balance of adult-led and free-choice activities. They provide more time for the children to explore the activities of their own choosing, enabling them to develop and progress at their own rate.

Additional opportunities to develop the children's writing skills and linking sounds to letters have been incorporated into every session via free choice activities. For example, children enjoy writing their name in the sand or corn flour, tracing the raised letters, discussing words beginning with the letter. Other children bring items for the word table with some making their own labels, for example, weeds for the W table.

Children now enjoy more time to develop their problem solving skills. Staff have learned to stand back and let children work out how to put things together for themselves. For example, children were able to apply their own sellotape to their puppet.

Children now enjoy many opportunities to explore and investigate living things, objects and materials through a range of activities readily available. For example, they enjoy hunting for mini-beasts in the garden and feeling the birds nest on the nature table.

Children now have ample opportunities to develop their creative skills and imagination, expressing their thoughts and ideas through a broad range of activities. Craft activities are no longer prescriptive. For example, children were able to give their puppet three or more eyes if they wished.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action 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 outstanding.

### **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 clean their hands hygienically after messy activities to prevent the spread of infection

- ensure staff and children's arrival and departure times are recorded for use in an emergency

### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)